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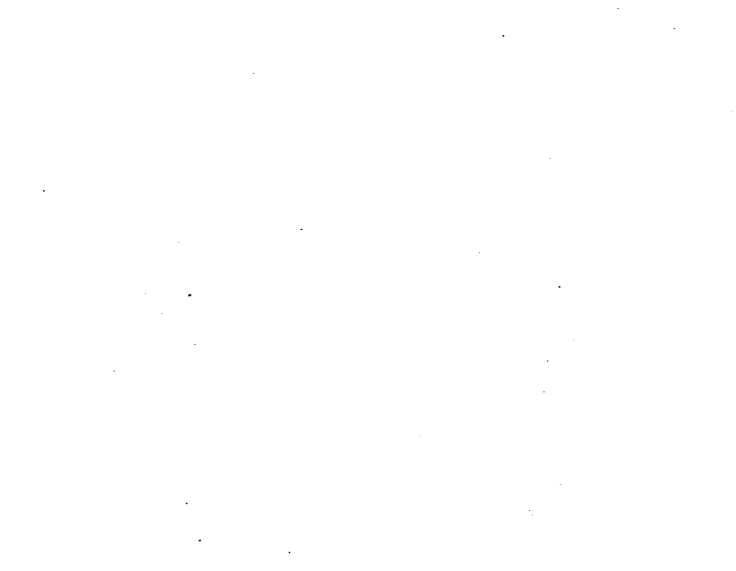
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TWENTY-SIX

SERMONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

SELECTED FROM THE WORKS

OF THE RIGHT REV.

WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.



LONDON:

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MEMOIR

OF THE

RIGHT REV. WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.

WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, second son of the Rev. William Beveridge, vicar of Barrow, in Leicestershire, was born there in 1637, and, after receiving his earlier education under the care of his father, was sent to the free school of Oakham, in the county of Rutland, whence, in May, 1653, he removed to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he was admitted as a sizar. At the university he pursued his studies with uncommon diligence, and devoted himself with such assiduity to the Oriental languages, that in his eighteenth year he wrote a Latin treatise on the Excellency and Use of the Oriental Tongues, especially the Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, and Samaritan; together with a Grammar of the Syriac language, in three books, 1658. In 1656 he took the degree of B.A., and in 1660, that of M.A. On the 3rd of January, 1661, he was ordained deacon in the church of St. Botolph, Aldersgate, in the city of London, by the celebrated Dr. Sanderson, bishop of Lincoln. On the 31st of the same month he was ordained priest in the same church. He was shortly after collated to the vicarage of Ealing, in Middlesex, by Dr. Sheldon, bishop of London. Here he remained for twelve years, devoting to his studies such leisure time as a sedulous discharge of his ministerial duties left at his disposal; the fruits of which were

tutiones Chronologicae," an elementary work on chronology, published in 1669, and dedicated to the then bishop of London, Dr. Henchman. In November, 1672, he resigned the vicarage of Ealing, on being chosen rector of St. Peter's, Cornhill, London, by the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of that city. In this wider and more conspicuous field of pastoral labour he exercised the various functions of his office with exemplary zeal; and the signal success that attended his ministrations as a parish priest attests the earnestness and assiduity with which he performed them, and justifies the eulogy which has styled him "the great restorer and reviver of primitive piety." Among the fruits of his learning and piety, may be reckoned his excellent Sermons, from which the following Selection has been made. In December, 1674, he was collated by bishop Henchman to the prebend of Chiswick, in the cathedral of St. Paul; and in November, 1681, he was made archdeacon of Colchester by bishop Compton, who had succeeded Dr. Henchman in the see of London. In November, 1684, he was installed prebendary of Canterbury. Shortly afterwards he became associated with Dr. Horneck in directing the religious societies which began to be formed in London in the reign of James II., and which contributed to the diffusion of religious knowledge and piety both in the metropolis and in the provinces. From these associations two permanent offshoots have originated: the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE, and the SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN FOREIGN PARTS. In 1690, he was nominated chaplain to king William and queen Mary; and in the following year he declined the see of Bath and Wells, on the deprivation of bishop Ken, who had refused the oaths of allegiance to the reigning

sovereign. But in 1704 he was consecrated bishop of St. Asaph, on the translation of Dr. George Hooper from that diocese to the see of Bath and Wells. He died on the 5th March, 1708, in the seventy-first year of his age, and was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral; to which he bequeathed his books, to serve as a foundation of a theological library, for the use of the Clergy of the city of London. Besides the works already mentioned, he wrote "Private Thoughts on Religion;" "The Church Catechism Explained;" "The Great Necessity of Frequent Communion;" "Thesaurus Theologicus, or, a Complete System of Divinity;" "A Defence of the Old Singing Psalms;" "Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles;" "Συνοδικὸν, sive Pandectæ Canonum SS. Apostolorum et Conciliorum ab Ecclesiâ Græcâ receptorum," and, "Codex Canonum Ecclesiæ Primitivæ Vindicatus et Illustratus."

Of the published Sermons of this learned and pious prelate—a hundred and fifty in number—only five or six had the advantage of being prepared by him for the press: but it is believed that the following Selection will not only sustain the high reputation which the author had, as a preacher, among the most eminent judges of literary merit in his own time, but also enlighten the understanding, confirm the faith, elevate the hope, and enlarge and warm the affections, of all who shall read them with some portion of that love of things sacred with which they were written.

The character of Bishop Beveridge's Sermons, which is given by Robert Nelson in his "Life of Bishop Bull¹," may properly be quoted in this short Memoir:—

"And now I have named this great and good man, I cannot forbear acknowledging the favourable dispensation of Provi-

¹ Life of Bishop Bull. Oxford Ed. 1846.

dence to the age in which we live, in blessing it with so many of those pious discourses, which this truly primitive prelate delivered from the pulpit; and I rather take the liberty to call it a favourable dispensation of Providence, because he gave no orders himself, that they should be printed; but humbly neglected them, as not being composed for the press. But this circumstance is so far from abating the worth of the Sermons, or diminishing the character of the Author, that to me it seemeth to raise the excellency of both; because it sheweth at once the true nature of a popular discourse, and the great talent this prelate had that way. For to improve the generality of hearers, they must be taught all the mysteries of Christianity, and the holy institutions belonging to it; since it is upon this true foundation, that the practice of Christian virtues must be built, to make them acceptable in the sight of God. And then all this must be delivered to the people in so plain and intelligible a style, that they may easily comprehend it; and it must be addressed to them in so affecting and moving a manner, that their passions may be winged to a vigorous prosecution of what is taught. If I mistake not, the Sermons of this learned Bishop answer this character; and I am confirmed in this opinion, by the judgment of those who are allowed to have the greatest talents for the pulpit, as well as for all other parts of learning. He had a way of gaining people's hearts, and touching their consciences, which bore some resemblance to the apostolical age."

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SERMON I.

CHRIST'S PRESENCE WITH HIS MINISTERS.

MATT. xxviii. 20.

“And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

WE are here assembled in the name and in the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord; and not only ours, but the Lord of the whole world, having absolute and supreme dominion over the whole creation; not only as he is God, and the Creator of all things, but likewise as man too: his human nature, by reason of its union to the Divine Person and its perfect obedience to the Divine will, being exalted above, and invested with power over, all other creatures whatsoever. For even as he is the Son of man, “There is given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him¹.” And “he having humbled himself, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, therefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father².” Hence we find the holy

¹ Dan. vii. 14.

² Phil. ii. 8—11.

angels themselves waiting upon him at his birth, in the wilderness, in his agony, and at his resurrection, when they also acknowledged him to be the Lord, saying, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay³." Yea, all the angels of God worship him, and are commanded so to do⁴. And as for this lower world, he hath "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession⁵." He hath "dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." "All kings are bound to fall down before him, and all nations to serve him⁶."

All creatures, therefore, both in heaven and earth, are now subject to our Lord Christ; and he orders, governs, and disposeth of them all, according to his own will and pleasure, and so as shall most conduce to his own glory, and his Church's good. For God, having "raised him from the dead, hath set him at his own right hand, . . . far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and made him head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all⁷." He is the head, therefore, not only of the Church, but over all things, to or for the Church; so that nothing is exempted from his dominion: nothing in heaven, in earth, or hell, but what is subject to his power; and therefore, nothing but what he can do for his own Catholic Church, which he hath purchased with his own blood. He can assist it with his grace, sanctify it by his Spirit, protect it by his power; he can make all things in heaven and earth work together for its present peace and future glory, maugre all the opposition that men or devils can make against it.

Thus much I thought good to premise concerning our Lord's power, in order to the explication of the words which I have now read, because he himself

³ Matt. xxviii. 6.

⁵ Psal. ii. 8.

⁴ Heb. i. 6.

⁶ Psal. lxxii. 8. 11.

⁷ Eph. i. 20—23.

taught so when he spake them. For being now about to send his apostles into the world, to preach and propagate the Gospel which he had planted, he first shows them, as it were, his own commission; acquainting them with the power he had to send them, and that in such words as comprehend all that I have said concerning it, yea, as much as words are able to express. "All power," saith he, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations^s," &c. As if he should have said, I have now all power over all things in the world conferred upon me; by virtue whereof I command, empower, and commissionate you to enlarge, settle, and govern the Church that I have founded; to administer the sacraments that I have instituted; and to persuade mankind to embrace my doctrine, to submit to my discipline, to obey my laws, and to come up to the terms which I have procured for them, and propounded to them, in order to their salvation.

"Go ye therefore," says he, "and teach all nations:" or, as the word *μαθητεύσατε* properly signifies, "Make all nations my disciples,—bring them over to my religion,—that both Jews and Gentiles may become one flock under me, the great Shepherd and Bishop of their souls." And this, saith he, I would have you do two ways: first, by "baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;" and so initiating them into my Church, upon their consenting to the faith which I have published to the world: and, secondly, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you;" that so they may be my disciples indeed; and not only by an outward profession of the faith which I have taught them, but likewise by performing sincere and universal obedience to all the commands that I have laid upon them.

When our Saviour gave this charge to his apostles, we may easily imagine that they were strangely surprised at the hearing of it. As when God bade Moses

^s Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.

go and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, "Moses said unto him, Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt⁹?" so when our Lord bade his apostles go and bring all nations out of their idolatries and superstitions into the profession of his religion, the apostles certainly could not but wonder at it, and say, at least within themselves, Who are we, a company of poor, weak, and illiterate men, that we should go to all nations, that we should bring them off from the religions of their forefathers, and that we should ever persuade the world to believe in a crucified Christ? This our Lord foresaw, and, therefore, as God answered Moses, saying, "Certainly I will be with thee;" so does our Saviour here encourage his apostles, saying, "And, behold, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."

Words of very great importance to us all, to the whole Church of God, especially to the governors of it, and to those that administer the word and sacraments in it; forasmuch as all the success that can be expected from the execution of any ecclesiastical function depends upon the performance of this promise, which, therefore, our Lord has so worded, that there is not a word in it but what hath its emphasis, and is much to be observed by us; as he himself seems to intimate by prefacing it with *ἰδοὺ*, Behold; take special notice of what I now say unto you.

Hence, therefore, we shall, first, very briefly consider the words apart, that so we may come to the better understanding of the whole. First, saith he, "I am with you;" I the eternal Son of God, and now become the Son of man too; I, who have the angels at my beck, and make the devils tremble with my looks; I, who in your sight have caused the storms to cease, the blind to see, the lame to walk, the dead to rise, only with a word of my mouth; I, who was delivered for your offences, but am now raised again for

⁹ Exod. iii. 11.

your justification ; I, who have all power both in heaven and earth committed to me ; “I am with you.” Not, I *will be* with you ; but, I *am* with you, in the present tense ; minding them thereby of his Divine essence and power, to which all things are present. And, therefore, as he elsewhere saith, “Before Abraham was, I am ¹,” so here, “I am with you at all times, to the end of the world,” as really as at this present.

And then it follows, I am μεθ’ ὑμῶν, “with you,” my apostles. For that these words were spoken, and this promise made, only to the apostles, is plain from that the eleven only are said to be present at this time ². And that besides this promise is made only to those who now received commission to go and convert all nations to the Christian faith, to baptize and teach mankind the commands of Christ ; which commission being granted only to the apostles, this promise also, annexed to it, must needs belong to them only. But then we must observe likewise, that as it belongs to them only, so it belongs to them all alike. “I am with you,” saith he, not with Peter only, or any one or more of you, but with you all equally, one as well as another. Yea, saith he, “I am with you,” πᾶσας τὰς ἡμέρας, “every day ;” wheresoever you are, whensoever you do any thing towards the executing the commission which I have now given you, I am with you in the doing of it. And that too, ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος, “to the very end of the world ;” that is, so long as I have a Church upon earth, which shall be till my coming again to judge the world : all this while I promise to be with you, and therefore as long as the world shall last.

The words being thus explained apart, that we may rightly apprehend our Lord’s meaning in the whole, there are two things to be considered :

First, In what sense the apostles were to continue to the end of the world.

Secondly, In what sense our Saviour here promises to be with them all that while.

¹ John viii. 58.

² Matt. xxviii. 16.

As for the first, it is plain, that our Saviour here supposeth that apostles were to continue upon earth to the end of the world; for otherwise it would be impossible for him to be with them so long, and, by consequence, to perform this promise to them. But it is as plain likewise, that the persons to whom our Saviour speaks these words were not to be here so long, being all long ago dead. And, therefore, I do not see how we can possibly understand the words in any other sense than this,—even that our Lord spake them to his apostles, not as private persons, as Peter, James, or John, &c., but as apostles, as persons now placed by him in an office that should always continue in his Church. So that the promise is made not so much to the persons of the apostles, as to the office apostolical; or at least to their persons only as vested with that office, and by consequence to all persons, to the end of the world, that should ever have that office conferred upon them.

For our better understanding of this, we must consider what it is properly to be an apostle of Christ, or wherein the office purely apostolical consisted. For which we must know, that those whom the Scriptures, and we from them, call apostles, had many extraordinary privileges granted to them, which were not essential to their office, not peculiar to them as apostles, but common to them with other disciples, and, therefore, were to die with them. As for example, Were they called immediately by Christ himself? So were the seventy, who were the ear and eye witnesses of what Christ taught and did. So were many others as well as they. Were they divinely inspired to speak all manner of languages; to foretell things to come; to work miracles to confirm their doctrine? So were they which were no apostles, as well as they that were. And, therefore, such things as these cannot be looked upon as any part of the apostolical office, but only as extraordinary favours and privileges vouchsafed to the persons of the apostles.

But the office properly *apostolical* consisted only in

such things as had an immediate reference to the propagating, edifying, and governing of the Church in all ages. Indeed our Saviour himself gives the apostles a particular description of their office in the very commission he here grants them for the execution of it; commanding them to convert all nations to his religion, to administer the sacraments to them, and to teach them all things that he had commanded them: under which is contained whatsoever is necessary to the instruction and government of his Church in all ages; as the ordaining persons to do it, censuring those who refuse instruction, comforting and encouraging those who receive it, and the like. This was properly the office apostolical; which, therefore, was not to die with the persons of the apostles, but was to be transmitted by them to all after-ages, as our Lord himself intimates in the very description of it. For he here bids his apostles go and make all nations his disciples; which, it is plain, the persons he spake these words to neither did, nor ever could accomplish, being to continue, as we know they did, but a little while upon earth; wherein it was impossible for them to go over all nations; much more to persuade them all to embrace the Christian faith. And, therefore, this command itself, as well as the promise, must needs be so understood, as to be given not only to the persons of the apostles then present, but to all that should succeed them in that office to the end of the world. So that from this very command we reasonably conclude that these words were meant not only of the apostles themselves, but of their successors in that office all along, until all nations have received the Gospel of Christ: much more if we consider the promise annexed to it, "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" which cannot possibly be fulfilled, unless there be apostles, or persons vested with the apostolical office, alway unto the end of the world.

Hence, therefore, it was, that the apostles, having received this command and promise from our Lord, and understanding from thence that it was his pleasure

that they should transfer their office to all future ages, by ordaining others into it, took care to do it. For besides the eleven, to whom these words were spoken, we find Matthias, Paul, and Barnabas, admitted into the same office, and expressly called "apostles" as well as they. So is Epaphroditus, bishop of Philippi, called by St. Paul himself³. And if we consult the ancient records of the Church, we shall there find, that James bishop of Jerusalem, Mark of Alexandria, Timothy of Ephesus, Titus of Crete, and Clemens of Rome, were all called "apostles." And as Theodoret observes, τοὺς νῦν καλουμένους Ἐπισκόπους Ἀποστόλους ὠνόμαζον, "those which we now call bishops, the primitive Christians called apostles." And so, indeed, may all bishops, rightly ordained, be called, as having the same office in the Church which the apostles had. And, therefore, the office which Matthias was chosen into is called ἐπισκοπή, "the office of a bishop"⁴. Hence St. Cyprian sometimes calls bishops by the name of apostles, sometimes apostles by the name of bishops. And the reason is, because bishops, as St. Jerome expresses it, "apostolorum locum tenent," they "supply the place of the apostles." Hence also, not only St. Cyprian, but Irenæus and Tertullian assert bishops to be the apostles' successors, and reckon up the succession of several of them from the apostles themselves. And St. Jerome himself, having affirmed all bishops, of whatsoever city, great or small, to be "ejusdem meriti, ejusdem et sacerdotii," he adds, "cæterum omnes apostolorum successores sunt," "they are all successors to the apostles."

And, therefore, whatsoever our Lord said to the apostles, as such, all succeeding apostles, or bishops, are obliged by it, as well as they: as St. Cyprian observed long ago, saying, "Christus qui dicit ad apostolos, ac per hoc ad omnes præpositos qui apostolis vicariâ ordinatione succedunt:" for the office is the same now as it was then. So that in the apostles'

³ Phil. ii. 25.

⁴ Acts i. 20.

days, and in all after-ages, and in all places of the world, as the same father words it, "*episcopatus unus est, cujus à singulis in solidum pars tenetur*:" "there is but one episcopacy, but one episcopal office, a part whereof is wholly possessed by every bishop." Which, as it quite overthrows the supremacy which the bishop of Rome pretends to over all other bishops, so it sufficiently proves the true sense and meaning of the words in my text. For seeing the office is still one and the same now, which it was in the apostles' days, and so will continue to the end of the world; seeing also there always will be such apostles in the Church, our Saviour, speaking to the eleven as apostles, might well say, "Lo, I am with you to the end of the world."

Having thus discovered in what sense the apostles were to continue in the Church to the end of the world, we are now to consider in what sense our Lord here promises to be always with them. To find out which we need not have recourse to the wild and extravagant opinion of the Ubiquitarians, asserting the human nature of Christ to be every where present. Neither is it sufficient to observe that his divine essence is present with them; for so it is with every creature, no creature being able to subsist without it: whereas our Saviour here promiseth to be with his apostles in some such peculiar sense, as can belong only to them, and to them only as his apostles. And that we might not be mistaken in a matter of such consequence as this, he himself hath elsewhere explained himself, and left upon record how these words are to be understood. For as he here promises his apostles that he will be with them to the end of the world, so he elsewhere tells them that his Holy Spirit shall be always with them: "And I will pray the Father," saith he, "and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth^s:" which is the same in effect with his own being always with them; for the Spirit proceeding from the Son, as well as from the Father, and

^s John xiv. 16.

being of the same nature and essence with him, "wheresoever the Spirit is, there is Christ also." So that, in short, our Saviour here promiseth his apostles that he will be always with them to the end of the world by his Holy Spirit accompanying and assisting of them in the discharge of their apostolical office. In the discharge, I say, of their apostolical office; for we are still to remember what I observed before,—even that these words were spoken to the apostles and their successors only as such: and, therefore, Christ's presence with them by his Holy Spirit, here promised, cannot be understood only of his illuminating, or sanctifying, or comforting presence, which He vouchsafeth to all believers, as well as unto them; but it must be understood in such a sense as is proper to the apostles, pastors, and governors of the Church in all ages: which, in brief, amounts to no more nor less than this, even that Christ having constituted such an office in his Church for the government and edification of it to the end of the world, he here promiseth that he himself, by his Holy Spirit, will be always present at the execution of it, so as to make it effectual to the great ends and purposes for which it was designed.

To explain this more fully to you, it will be necessary to instance in the several parts of the apostolical office, and to show how Christ, according to his promise, is always present by his Spirit at the performance of them. Now the first and principal part of this office is the ordaining others into it, and giving them power to ordain others, and so successively to the end of the world; which is necessarily supposed in the promise itself, as that without which it could never be fulfilled.

The first, therefore, that were ordained into this office were ordained by Christ himself. The form and manner of which ordination is set down ⁶, where it is said that Christ, coming to his apostles, said to them, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me,

even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost :” where we may plainly see how our Saviour would be with his apostles, after his body was removed from them,—even by his Holy Spirit, which he therefore breathes from himself into them, by that means consecrating them his apostles and vicegerents upon earth ; telling them withal, that as “ the Father sent him, so he sent them.” Whereby he certifies them, that whatsoever power he had received from the Father for the instruction and government of his Church, he now left the same with them, or rather with the Holy Spirit which he breathed into them : and, by consequence, that, as he sent them, so were they to send others, by conferring the Spirit upon them, and so from one to another all along, that the Spirit, which they now received, might continue with them and their successors, and so supply his place upon earth until his coming again.

Hence the apostles, being thus ordained and instructed by our Lord, took special care to transfer the same Spirit to others, which they had received from him. But this they could not do after the same manner as Christ had done it to them, even by breathing upon them : for that way was peculiar to Christ, from whom the Spirit proceedeth. Wherefore they, being doubtless directed thereto by the same Spirit, transmitted it to others by laying their hands upon them ; which was the old way that had been used in the Church before : for so Moses communicated the spirit of wisdom to Joshua, thereby constituting him his successor in the government of Israel, even by laying his hands upon him⁷. Thus Paul and Barnabas were ordained by the special appointment of the Holy Ghost himself⁸. For it is said, that they, having “ fasted and prayed, laid their hands upon them,” and so sent them out : who, thereupon, are said in the next verse to be sent by the Holy Ghost ; it being now

⁷ Deut. xxxiv. 9.

⁸ Acts xiii. 3.

conferred upon them by the imposition of hands. Thus St. Paul communicated *χάρισμα τοῦ Θεοῦ*, as he calls it, the gift of the Spirit unto Timothy⁹. And wheresoever we read that the apostles ordained any, they still did it after this manner,—even by laying their hands upon them: and that too, whether they ordained them into their whole office, or else into any part of it. For the whole care of the Church being committed unto them, they had power to constitute what officers they thought fit under them. But still they did it by laying their hands upon them, and so communicating of the same Spirit unto them, which they had received from Christ. As when they found it necessary to have deacons in the Church, to take care of the widows, they ordained them by laying their hands upon them¹, thereby transferring so much of the Spirit upon them, as was necessary for that office. And when they afterwards saw it very necessary that there should be other officers in the Church, which we now call presbyters, that should have power under them to preach the Gospel, and administer the sacraments, in places where they themselves could not be always present; upon these also they laid their hands, and by that means communicated so much of the Spirit unto them as was necessary for the due and effectual execution of the said office.

Thus, therefore, it is, that the apostolical office hath been handed down from one to another ever since the apostles' days to our time, and so will be to the end of the world, Christ himself being continually present at such imposition of hands; thereby transferring the same Spirit, which he had first breathed into his apostles, upon others successively after them, as really as he was present with the apostles themselves, when he first breathed it into them. Insomuch that they who are thus ordained are said to be made bishops by the Holy Ghost himself, as well as the apostles were². By which means the Holy Catholic Church always hath

⁹ 2 Tim. i. 6.¹ Acts vi. 6.² Acts xx. 28.

been, and still is, truly apostolical, as it is called in the Nicene Creed. And the several parts of the apostolical office are now as effectually performed by their successors, and others ordained under them, as they were while the apostles themselves lived. For it was not the persons of the apostles, but their office, influenced and assisted by the Spirit of God, that made the sacraments they administered to be valid, and their preaching the Gospel so prevalent upon those that heard it. Though Paul himself planted, and Apollos watered, it was God only that gave the increase.

And so it is to this day: all the efficacy that there is, or can be, in the administration of any ecclesiastical office, depends altogether upon the Spirit of God going along with the office, and assisting at the execution of it. Without which the sacraments we administer would be but empty signs, and our preaching no more than beating of the air. Whereas, on the other side, Christ, according to his promise, being always present by his Holy Spirit at the administration of the several offices which he has ordained in his Church, they can never fail of their designed effect, if the persons to whom they are administered be but rightly disposed and qualified for it. By this means they that are duly baptized are “born again, not only of water, but of the Spirit also³,” and so, together with the “washing of regeneration, they have the renewing of the Holy Ghost⁴.” Hence also, in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, the worthy receiver does really by faith partake of the mystical body and blood of Christ, and of such influences of the Holy Spirit as shall enable him to walk as becomes a member of Christ. And whensoever we read, preach, or publish the Gospel as Christ taught it, the Holy Spirit goes along with it, so that it becomes the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. And seeing our Lord thus continually accompanies the apostles and their successors, so as to vouchsafe his Spirit to those on whom they lay their

³ John iii. 5.

⁴ Tit. iii. 5.

hands, and to co-operate by the same Spirit with those who are so ordained by them, in their administration of the word and sacraments; hence he may well be said to be always with them, according to the promise he makes them in my text.

But besides that imposition of hands, whereby the apostles transmitted the Spirit they had received, together with their apostolical office, down to succeeding ages, we find them sometimes laying their hands on believers baptized, that thereby the Holy Ghost might come upon them, not with respect to any office, but only to confirm and strengthen them in the Christian faith.

For when the Samaritans had received the word of God, and were baptized by Philip, who was no apostle, but only a deacon, the apostles at Jerusalem, hearing of it, sent Peter and John unto them, who having "laid their hands upon them, they received the Holy Ghost ⁵." Philip, indeed, having had the apostles' hands laid upon him, had thereby received power to baptize them with water and the Holy Ghost; but it seems he had no power to lay his hands upon them, and by that means to confer any greater measure of the Spirit upon them. No, that was to be done only by the apostles themselves; who, therefore, sent two of their own body as far as from Jerusalem to Samaria on purpose to do it: which certainly they would never have done, had this been an useless ceremony, or if Philip, or any one under an apostle, could have done it. So that this instance is of itself sufficient to prove that this was an act peculiar to the apostolical office; and that our Saviour, according to his promise, was really present at the performance of it; seeing the apostles had no sooner laid their hands upon them, but they immediately received the Holy Ghost. Another instance of the same nature we find ⁶, where St. Paul, being at Ephesus, and finding some disciples there baptized only with the baptism of John, he laid his hands upon them, and so they received the Holy Ghost.

⁵ Acts viii. 17.

⁶ Acts xix. 6.

Hence the Catholic Church, in all ages, hath not only retained this apostolical rite, which we now call Confirmation, but hath always esteemed it an essential part of the apostolical office, and therefore to be performed by none but the apostles themselves and their successors to the end of the world. And therefore it was the ancient and constant custom of the primitive Church, as it is ours, for the bishop of every diocese to go into the lesser cities and villages belonging to him, and there lay his hands upon those who were baptized by priests or deacons, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; as we learn from St. Jerome himself, whose words are, "*Non abnuo hanc esse ecclesiarum consuetudinem, ut ad eos qui minoribus urbibus per presbyteros et diaconos baptizati sunt, episcopus ad invocationem Sancti Spiritus manum impositurus excurrat.*"

And, therefore, how any bishops in our days dare neglect so considerable a part of their office, I know not; but fear they will have no good account to give of it, when they come to stand before our Lord's tribunal. And, as for others, who, contrary to the practice of the primitive Christians, either refuse or neglect Confirmation, when they may have it administered to them, they have just cause to suspect that they have no good sense of religion, nor regard for the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit; for, if they had, they would use all means for the attainment thereof; especially this, which hath been found effectual for that end by the Catholic and Apostolic Church in all ages, where persons have been duly prepared for it: our Lord being, according to his promise in my text, always present at the performance of this, as well as of any other part of the Apostolical Office.

There is one thing still behind, which we must by no means omit, especially upon this occasion; and that is, the power of governing the Church, which our Lord left with his apostles and their successors to the end of the world; but so that he, according to his promise, is always present with them at the execution of it.

For this power is granted to them in the very charter to which this promise is annexed ; for here our Lord gives them commission not only to baptize, but likewise to teach those who are his disciples to observe whatsoever he had commanded. Whereby they are empowered both to declare what are those commands of Christ which men ought to observe, and also to use all means to prevail upon men to observe them : such as are, correcting and punishing those who violate, rewarding and encouraging those who keep them. But our Saviour's kingdom being, as himself saith, not of this world, but purely spiritual, he hath authorized his substitutes in the government of it to use rewards and punishments of the same nature ; even to admonish delinquents in his name to forsake their sins ; and if they continue obstinate, and neglect such admonitions, to excommunicate, or cast them out of his Church ; and, upon their repentance, to absolve and receive them in again. This power our Saviour first promised to St. Peter, and in him to the rest of the apostles ⁷. But it was not actually conferred upon them till after his resurrection, when, having breathed, he said unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost : whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained ⁸." As if he should have said, I, the Son of man, having power upon earth also to forgive sins, do now commit the same to you ; so that whose sins soever are remitted or retained by you, are so by me also. From whence it is plain, both that the apostles received power to remit and retain sins, and that Christ himself concurs with them in the exercise of that power ; and how he doth it,—even by his Holy Spirit now breathed into them.

To explain the full extent and latitude of this power would require more time than can be allowed upon this day, whereon it is to be exercised : and, therefore, I shall observe only two things concerning it ; whereof

⁷ Matt. xvi. 19.

⁸ John xx. 22, 23.

the first is, that how great soever the power be, which our Lord committed to his apostles, and their successors, for the government of his Church in all ages, it is but ministerial,—they act only under him as his ministers and stewards, and must one day give an account to him of all their actions. Yea, whatsoever power they have of this nature, it is still his power in their hands; they derive it continually from him, who is always present with them: and therefore, as they themselves need to have a care how they exert this power, or neglect the exerting of it, so others had need to take care, too, that they neither resist nor despise it.

The other thing I would observe unto you is, that, for the better execution of this power, it hath been the constant custom of the apostles, and their successors in all ages, to visit the Churches committed to their charge; to inquire into the faith and manners both of the clergy and laity that are under them; and to use so much of their authority, and give such orders, as they found necessary for the due observation of their Lord's commands. Thus we find the apostles frequently visiting the Churches they had planted; and St. Paul particularly keeping a solemn visitation at Miletus, where he sent for the elders of Ephesus, and of all Asia (as Irenæus affirms, and the context itself proves), and summoned them to appear before him there, where he gave them many apostolical admonitions and directions how to feed the flock, over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers⁹. Afterwards we find it recorded in ecclesiastical history, that St. John often visited the Asiatic Churches, as his peculiar province. And I do not question but where we read of Pinytus, Bishop of Gnossus, and Dionysius of Alexandria, laying their commands upon their clergy, in the first ages of the Church, it was at such a visitation as this: and we cannot doubt of St. Cyprian's care in this particular, so long as he resided upon his

⁹ Acts xx. 28.

bishopric, seeing that in his very recess, when he was forced to retire, he visited them, as himself saith, by his letters, sending several both to the clergy and laity, still extant in his works; wherein he sometimes re-proves, sometimes admonishes, and directs them how to carry and behave themselves in that juncture.

Indeed, this is so necessary to the discharging of the episcopal or apostolical office, that it cannot be imagined that ever any conscientious bishop durst neglect it; insomuch that, in several ages after the apostles, we have no ecclesiastical law, or canon, as I remember, about episcopal visitations; because there was no need of them till about the sixth or seventh century, when there were several canons made concerning the time and manner of keeping them: as the sixth council at Arles decreed, that every bishop should go about his diocese once every year. Ivo quotes an ancient canon of the second council at Seville, that every bishop shall once a year go about his diocese, and confirm and teach the people. The second council at Braga in Portugal decreed, that bishops in their visitations should instruct their clergy how to administer the sacrament. The fourth at Toledo, that they shall then inquire into the fabric of their several churches, and examine what repairs they wanted. Another at Augusta Vindelicorum, or Ausburg, as some think, as others at Ratisbon, in Germany, decreed, that when the bishop goes about his diocese to confirm the people, the presbyters shall be always ready to attend him. There are several other canons, enjoining bishops to visit at least once a year, and directing them what to do at their visitations; but none, that I know of, that they shall visit in general: the Church taking it for granted all along that no bishop would totally omit so necessary a part of his duty, but would some time, and after some manner or other, visit the diocese that belonged to him: which certainly none can choose but do, who considers either the account he must one day give of his stewardship, or the encouragement our Lord himself has given him to do it, in that he hath promised

to be always with him in the discharge of his office, saying to his apostles, and their successors for ever, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Now the promises being duly weighed, even that our Lord himself is always present by his Holy Spirit with his apostles and their successors in the execution of the apostolical office, many useful inferences might be thence deduced. I shall instance in some few, which I hope will not be altogether unworthy of your consideration at this time.

Hence, therefore, in the first place, I observe how much we are all bound to acknowledge the goodness, to praise, magnify, and adore the name of the most high God, in that we were born and bred, and still live in a Church, wherein the apostolical line hath through all ages been preserved entire, there having been a constant succession of such bishops in it, as were truly and properly successors to the apostles, by virtue of that apostolical imposition of hands, which being begun by the apostles, hath been continued from one to another, ever since their time down to ours. By which means the same Spirit, which was breathed by our Lord into his apostles is, together with their office, transmitted to their lawful successors,—the pastors and governors of our Church at this time, and acts, moves, and assists at the administration of the several parts of the apostolical office in our days as much as ever. From whence it follows, that the means of grace, which we now enjoy, are in themselves as powerful and effectual as they were in the apostles' days; and if they prove not always so successful now as they were then, that cannot be imputed to any want of efficacy in them, but to some defect or other in those who use them; for they who are duly prepared, cannot but always find the same effect from them, because there is always the same cause,—even the Spirit of God moving upon his word and sacraments, when administered by our Church, as well as when administered by the apostles, to whom it was first given.

And here it may not be amiss to observe, what I have often thought of, not without admiration, how strangely the spirit of the apostles hath run through our Church, all along, ever since the Reformation, diffusing itself from the head, which first received it, into all her real members: as may easily be seen, not only in the discipline of our Church, but likewise in its doctrine, manner of worship, patience under sufferings, universal charity, and particularly in its loyalty and submission to the civil magistrate; which the apostles, assisted by the Spirit of God, did not only press upon others, but practised themselves. And the same Spirit hath enabled our Church constantly to do the same: inso-much that malice itself could never fasten any thing of rebellion upon our Church, as now constituted, nor upon any of her members that lived faithfully in her communion. Many of them have suffered imprisonment, sequestration, yea, martyrdom itself, as the apostles did; and yet all have been as free from rebellion and treason as they were: which to me is a great instance of the same Spirit still working in our Church, which wrought so effectually upon them.

And this I verily believe is the great reason why the devil hath such a spite at our Church, still stirring up adversaries of all sorts against it: papists on the one hand, and sectaries on the other, and all, if possible, to destroy it: even because the Spirit which is ministered in it is so contrary to his nature, and so destructive of his kingdom, that he can never expect to domineer and tyrannize over the people of the land, so long as such a Church is settled among them, and they continue firm to it. And therefore, seeing he cannot, by all his secret plots and contrivances, totally overthrow it, he still uses the utmost of his skill and power to draw as many as he can from its communion, and so make them schismatics; that so being separated from the body, they may not partake of the Spirit that is in it, nor, by consequence, receive any benefit from this promise of our blessed Saviour to the governors of the Catholic and Apostolic Church in all

ages, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

The next thing I would observe unto you, from what we have now discoursed of, concerns us of the clergy, who are entrusted with any part of the apostolical office. For being ordained by those who succeeded the apostles in a direct line, by the imposition of their hands upon us, we received not only power to administer the word and sacraments, but likewise the Spirit of Christ to accompany and influence such administrations: by whom, therefore, Christ himself is always present with us, whensoever we are employed in the work that he hath set us. Which consideration, methinks, should strike an awe and terror into us, and make us dread the thoughts of doing the work of our Lord negligently. And therefore, whether we minister unto him in the public liturgy of our Church, read or preach his holy word, or administer his blessed sacraments, let us all be persuaded to have an especial care that we do it not after a careless or perfunctory manner, but with all that reverence and godly fear, with that earnestness and devotion, with that seriousness and intention of mind, as becomes those who believe that our Lord himself is always present with us, not only to take notice of what we do, but to bless and sanctify it to the salvation of men's immortal souls.

Hence also it concerns us all, to carry and behave ourselves at all times, to the utmost of our power, as becometh the ministers of Christ; to whom the eternal Son of God hath vouchsafed so high an honour, as not only to employ us in his own immediate service, but likewise to reside himself continually with us. And therefore, seeing he is pleased to honour us with his own presence, let us endeavour to honour him too, by walking in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. Especially, let us take all the care we can to avoid whatsoever is offensive to him, or unworthy of that high and heavenly calling in which he hath placed us. It is true, the efficacy of

the word and sacraments is not impeded by the wickedness or unworthiness of him by whom they are administered, as our Church hath rightly determined; because that depends not upon the person, but the office, and Christ's promise to it. But, howsoever, it behoves us, who attend continually upon him, to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless; lest otherwise we bring a scandal upon our profession, and give too much occasion to the enemies of our Lord to blaspheme his most sacred name: especially considering what a sad and dismal thing it would be, if we, who are employed by Christ to persuade others to obey his gospel, should not obey it ourselves, and so not save ourselves as well as those that hear us; but be instruments in God's hand to bring others to heaven, and yet we ourselves be cast down to hell: which is not only possible, but impossible to be avoided, unless we look very narrowly to ourselves. I am sure St. Paul thought so, and therefore saith, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway¹." And if so great an apostle was forced to take so much pains with himself, lest, when he had preached salvation unto others, he himself should not attain it, what cause have you and I to do so! But our comfort is, that our Lord is always present with us; and, therefore, we can never want assistance from him, if we be not first wanting to ourselves.

Hoping, therefore, that this consideration of Christ's promise to us will have its desired effects upon us of the clergy, I shall in the next place show what use others also may, and ought to make of it: and for that end, shall apply myself unto you all. Seeing, therefore, that our Lord hath promised to be with his apostles and their successors to the end of the world; seeing the succession of the office apostolical hath without interruption been continued in our Church

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

to this day; and seeing, therefore, that Christ, according to his promise, is alway present by his Holy Spirit at the word and sacraments, as administered by our Church, to quicken, actuate, and make them effectual to the salvation of our souls; hence in his name, and for his sake, and your own too, I humbly pray and beseech you all, that you would take all the opportunities you can to meet your Lord and Saviour in the public offices of the Church, to which he hath thus promised his peculiar presence. And think it not enough to be there; but consider all the while in whose presence you are, and deport yourselves accordingly. And while we read or preach the Gospel, call upon you, exhort and pray you to observe whatsoever Christ hath commanded, still remember the apostle's words, that "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God²." And, therefore, receive it not as the word of man, but, as it is indeed, the word of God himself.

Above all things, take heed that you have not men's persons in admiration, so as to think the word and sacraments one jot the better or worse, because administered by one person rather than another. For they that do so, it is evident, regard the person more than the office; and then it is no wonder if they receive no benefit or advantage from it. For all the hopes and expectations that we have, or can have, from the exercise of any ecclesiastical office, by whomsoever performed, are grounded only upon Christ's promise to the office itself,—to be present with it by his Holy Spirit; without which all the fine words and phrases in the world can never mortify one lust, nor convert one soul to God and goodness. And therefore ye, whensoever you address yourselves to the public prayers of our Church, to hear God's word read, or preached, or to receive the holy sacrament, still keep the eye of your faith fixed upon Christ, as there

² 2 Cor. v. 20.

really present according to his promise, ready to dispense his heavenly blessings by his Holy Spirit, working together with the ordinance, to make it accomplish the end of its institution,—even your sanctification in this world, and your eternal salvation in the world to come. Do but observe these few rules, in all your solemn devotions, as performed by that part of the Catholic Church, which by the blessing of Almighty God is settled amongst you; and then I dare assure you, in the name of my Lord and Master Jesus Christ, that you will all experience the truth of what you have now heard,—even that Christ is always present with his apostles in the discharge of their office to the end of the world.

Moreover, from the premisses duly weighed, you may all very easily observe what reason you all have to continue steadfast in the communion of our Church, wherein the word and sacraments are so powerfully and effectually administered; and not to deviate from her, either into popery on the one hand, or schism on the other. For, as to popery, although we do not deny but that the apostolical succession hath been continued in the Church of Rome; yet we cannot but affirm also, that they have made very bad use of it, or rather have most egregiously abused it; having clogged the several offices with so many superstitious ceremonies, that they quench the Spirit which should enflame and quicken them, or else perform them so imperfectly and irregularly, that they are not the same that were instituted by Christ, and so not capable of having this promise fulfilled to them. I shall instance only in two,—the reading of the Scriptures, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

As for the first, the public and solemn reading of the word of God, by a minister of Christ, lawfully ordained and appointed thereunto, I look upon it as a thing of much greater consequence than it is commonly thought to be; yea, I cannot but reckon it amongst the most useful and prevalent means of grace that we do or can enjoy. For although it be our duty to read the Scrip-

tures in private (which I hope you all do), yet none of you but may find by experience, that a chapter once read in public, as before described, is of greater force, and makes deeper impressions upon you, than if you run it ten times over by yourselves. And the reason is, because the same Spirit, which indited the Scriptures, accompanies such solemn reading of them, and sets it home upon the hearts and consciences of them that hear it. So that besides the majesty and authority that appears in the Scriptures themselves, as they are the very word of God, much more than any exposition of them can be; there is likewise at such a time the power and efficacy of the Spirit of Christ then present, to press and enforce it upon the minds of all such as duly attend to the reading of them. But now, in the Church of Rome, all this is lost. For although they read the Scriptures indeed, yet they read them as they do their prayers,—in an unknown tongue, at least to the greatest part of the congregation, and commonly to the very reader himself. By which means the people are deprived not only of the Scriptures themselves, but likewise of the assistance of God's Spirit, which otherwise would accompany the reading of them. For, as they order the matter, the Spirit of God himself cannot make his own word effectual to their salvation without a miracle. He must first give them the gift of tongues, and make them understand a language they never learned, before it is possible for him to make his own word of any use or advantage to them. For he never works upon our minds but in a way suitable to our natures, as we are rational creatures, so as first to clear up our apprehensions of the good he propounds to us, and so incline our wills to the embracement of it. But where the word of God is propounded in an unknown tongue, it is impossible for the people to have any apprehensions of it at all, for the Spirit of God to work upon, and to clear up so as to influence the will by them. By which means the word of God itself is made of little or no effect to those who live in the communion of that Church.

The same reason holds good also as to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as administered by the Romish Church. For the whole office belonging to it is wrapped up in a language the people do not understand, and therefore know not what the priest saith, nor whether he consecrates the host or no; only they see him perform a great many ceremonies as unintelligible as the language he speaks, and at length he puts a wafer into their mouths. Now what is there in all this that the Spirit of God can make use of to the comfort and edification of the people; especially considering that the priest intends not to minister the Spirit of Christ unto them, but only his real body, as they are bound to believe the wafer to be? But if it was possible,—as it neither is, nor can be,—to convert the bread into the body of Christ, and give it to the people, what good could that do them, if abstracted from the Spirit? For, as our Lord himself saith, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing³.” But after all this, I do not see how the promise of the Spirit can belong to the sacrament, as they manage it. For the promise is made not to any one part of it as distinct from the other, but to the whole, as it was instituted by Christ. And where the institution is not rightly observed, neither can the promise annexed to it be performed. But it is plain that our Saviour instituted the cup as well as the bread: and it is as plain that the Church of Rome administers the bread only, and not the cup. And, therefore, they, by depriving the people of one half of the Communion, do thereby deprive them of the comfort and benefit of the whole.

And, therefore, were there no other, as there are many arguments to deter sober and considering men from the communion of that Church, this, one would think, is of itself sufficient to do it,—even because those great means of grace, the word and sacrament itself, are so administered by it as to be made of no use at all to the people.

³ John vi. 63.

And as for schism, they certainly hazard their salvation at a strange rate, who separate themselves from such a Church as ours is, wherein the apostolical succession, the root of all Christian communion, hath been so entirely preserved, and the word and sacraments are so effectually administered; and all to go into such assemblies and meetings, as can have no pretence to the great promise in my text. For it is manifest that this promise was made only to the apostles and their successors to the end of the world. Whereas in the private meetings, where their teachers have no apostolical or episcopal imposition of hands, they have no ground to pretend to succeed the apostles, nor, by consequence, any right to the Spirit which our Lord here promiseth; without which, although they preach their hearts out, I do not see what spiritual advantage can accrue to their hearers by it. And, therefore, whatsoever they may think of it, for my own part, I would not be without this promise of our Saviour for all the world, as knowing, that not only myself, but the whole Catholic Church, is highly concerned in it; it being by virtue of this promise, that the Church is continually acted, guided, and assisted by the Spirit of God, and so the ordinary means of grace are made effectual to salvation; which otherwise would be of no force or efficacy at all. And, therefore, to speak modestly, they must needs run a very great hazard, who cut themselves off from ours, and, by consequence, from the Catholic Church, and so render themselves incapable of receiving any benefit from this promise, or from the means of grace which they do or may enjoy.

Upon these, therefore, and such like considerations, which this text will readily suggest to your serious and more retired thoughts, I humbly advise and beseech you all in the name of Christ your Saviour, and as you do tender your salvation by him, that you would not hearken unto those who go about to seduce you from our Church, but that you would continue firm and faithful to it. For so long as you do so, I dare undertake for you, that you are in the ready way to heaven.

But if you once forsake that, whither you will next go I know not; no, nor you neither.

But when I speak of your continuing firm and faithful to our Church, I do not mean that you should only talk high for her, much less inveigh against her adversaries, or damn all those who are not of her communion; for this is contrary to the Divine and apostolical Spirit that is in her, which is a Spirit of meekness, and soberness, and charity. But my meaning is, that you firmly believe whatsoever she, from the word of God, propounds as an article of faith; and faithfully perform whatsoever she, from the same word, requires as a necessary duty to God or man; and, by consequence, so live in the communion of our Church, as to live up to the rules and constitutions of it.

And O that all we, who are here present, and all that profess to be of our Church, wheresoever they are, would for the future do so! What an holy, what an happy people should we then be! how pious towards God, how loyal to our sovereign, how just and charitable towards all men! This would be the way to convince our adversaries of their errors and mistakes, when they see how far we excel them in virtue and good works: and this would be the way, too, to secure our Church against all the attempts that men or devils can make upon her. For then our Lord himself would delight to dwell amongst us, and be always present with us, not only by his Spirit, but likewise by his power too. And if he be with us, we need not fear what flesh can do against us: so that we may lay it down as a most certain truth, that our Church can never be destroyed but by itself. For if we do not first fail of performing our duty unto him, be sure Christ will never fail of performing his promise unto us. But how proud, how malicious soever our adversaries are, and whatsoever designs they may carry on against us, "he that sitteth in the heavens will laugh them to scorn; our Lord will have them in derision:" he will abate their pride, assuage their malice, or else confound their devices, so as to make them fall themselves into the same pit that

they dig for others. And notwithstanding all their endeavours to the contrary, he will settle our Church upon such foundations, that the gates of hell itself shall never be able to prevail against it. Neither will he only continue his Church to us, but likewise his Spirit to our Church, so as always to perform this promise in my text; "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

O blessed Jesu! thou eternal Son of God; to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be everlasting honour, praise, and glory, from this time forth and for evermore.

SERMON II.

CHRISTIANITY AN HOLY PRIESTHOOD.

1 PET. ii. 5.

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

WHEN the Lord, the Lord God omnipotent, had by the word of his power commanded all things out of nothing, it is written, “That God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good¹.” Every thing was just as he would have it, exactly fitted to the ends and uses for which he designed it; and therefore it was very good in his sight, or he was much pleased with it; and so he hath been ever since with all things in heaven, except the apostate angels; every thing else moving and acting there continually according to his will and pleasure. Neither is there any thing that he hath made upon earth, but what is very good in his eyes, so that he is infinitely pleased with it, except mankind; who, being fallen from their first estate, are so far from being very good, that they are very bad in the sight of God,—as bad as bad can be: for it is written, “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continu-

¹ Gen. i. 31.

ally².” This is the case of man in general, even of all mankind, from first to last. There never was a mere man, from the fall to this day, that was every way such as God made him; and, therefore, never one, that did any one thing that in itself was perfectly good in the sight of God, and so pleasing or acceptable unto him. But the whole race of mankind being corrupted in all the faculties of their souls and members of their bodies, and always, therefore, acting irregularly and contrary to the will of God, he is alway displeased with them, and with every thing they think, or speak, or do of themselves, or by their own natural powers. So that he might justly have condemned them all to the same everlasting fire, “that is prepared for the devil and his” apostate “angels;” and would certainly have done it, but that he knew how to advance the glory of his goodness and truth, in restoring them to a capacity of pleasing him again, and enabling them accordingly to do so, if they will, and to be willing also to do it.

This is a mystery that is beyond the reach of human understanding; neither could any man have thought it possible, if God had not revealed it in his holy word: but now that we have his word for it, we have surer grounds to believe it, than we have to believe any thing that we ourselves can understand. From whence we may see how much we ought to value the Holy Scriptures, and likewise how far the Christian exceeds all other religions: for though all sorts of people profess some kind of religion, whereby they hope to please the god they worship; yet none have any sure ground to believe they worship the true God, nor to hope that he will be pleased with what they do, but only they who believe the Holy Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament to be given by his inspiration; which seeing none but Christians do, none but they can be ever certain that any thing they do is pleasing unto God: but they may be certain of it, and ought to be so, in that they have the way and manner how to

² Gen. vi. 5.

do it most plainly revealed to them by God himself in many places of his Holy Scriptures, and particularly in that which I have now read.

The apostle writes this epistle to the elect, or saints of God. And having in the first chapter put them in mind how they became such, even by being born again by the word of God³, in this he adviseth them as “new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the same word,” that as they were born, “so they may grow by it⁴.” “If so be,” saith he, “ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious⁵.” For if they had once tasted of it, as be sure they had, they could not but long for more of the grace of Christ, here called the Lord, as appears from the following words; “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.” For the Church being wholly built upon Christ, and all our hopes of salvation depending upon him; for the better strengthening and confirming our faith in him, he is often spoken of in Holy Writ under the name and notion of a rock, or stone. “Behold,” saith God by the prophet, “I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth in him shall not make haste,” or “be confounded⁶.” And “the stone,” saith David, “which the builders refused, is become the head of the corner⁷.” For that this stone is Christ, appears from the many places in the New Testament, where these words are applied to him, not only by his apostle⁸, but by Christ himself⁹. And to this the apostle alludes in this very place, saying, “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious:” which is the same in effect with his being “refused of the builders, but chosen of God to be the head of the corner.” The corner, or foundation-stone, upon which

³ Ver. 21.⁴ Ver. 2.⁵ Ver. 3.⁶ Isa. xxviii. 16. Rom. ix. 33.⁷ Ps. cxviii. 22.⁸ Acts iv. 11. 1 Pet. ii. 7.⁹ Matt. xxi. 42. Mark xii. 10. Luke xx. 17.

the whole fabric resteth. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ¹."

But the apostle here calls him a "living stone," to show that this is only a metaphorical expression, denoting his firmness and stability, together with the great need there is of him in erecting the house here spoken of: but that he is not such a stone as those we see upon earth, that are all without sense and life, but a "living stone;" a stone that hath life in itself, and gives life to all that come unto him, and are built upon him. And, therefore, the apostle having said, "To whom coming as to a living stone," he adds, "Ye also as lively," or rather as living "stones, are built up a spiritual house." He is such a living stone himself, that he makes them also, who come unto him, to be so: who, therefore, as such, are built up a spiritual house; an house of God, a temple wherein the living God himself is pleased to dwell; according to that of the apostle to the saints at Corinth, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you²?" And to those at Ephesus, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit³." Whence we see, that the whole communion of saints, the body of Christ, are the spiritual house spoken of in my text; the house of God, or his habitation, by reason of his Spirit dwelling in them. And, therefore, they are all of the same household, the "household of God," as it is here called; and elsewhere, "the household of faith⁴:" because it is by faith that they are built upon Christ, the foundation of this house. Hence it is that they are all advised "to

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 11.

³ Eph. ii. 19—22.

² 1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19.

⁴ Gal. vi. 10.

build up one another in their most holy faith⁵." And the apostle often speaks of edifying the Church, edifying the body of Christ, edifying one another in love, that "all things may be done to edifying," and the like. All which expressions have relation to this spiritual house, denoting the necessity of our being edified, or built up, in faith and love, so that we may be real parts of it, and grow up into a holy temple in the Lord.

But in every temple of the Lord it is necessary that there be likewise a priesthood to offer sacrifices suitable to such a temple. And so there is here: for the apostle having said, that the saints are a "spiritual house," or temple, he adds, that they are also an "holy priesthood." As they are the "living stones" of which this temple is composed and consisteth, so they are likewise all of the order of priesthood; "an holy priesthood," proper for such an house, where the most holy God resideth. This was first revealed in the Old Testament, where God said, "his people should be unto him a kingdom of priests⁶." A kingdom wherein all the subjects are both "kings and priests;" or, as St. Peter a little after my text expresseth it, a "royal priesthood⁷." And how they come to be so we learn from St. John, saying, that "Jesus Christ hath made us kings and priests to God and the Father⁸." As he gives his saints a kingdom, so he consecrates them all to be priests: not such as were under the law, when the priesthood was confined to one family, and offered up only carnal sacrifices; but they are an "holy priesthood," ordained to "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

For the understanding of which words it will be necessary to consider, what sacrifices they are which the saints offer up to God; wherefore they are called spiritual sacrifices; and that these spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

First, therefore, a sacrifice, in general, is properly

⁵ Jude 20.

⁷ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

⁶ Exod. xix. 6.

⁸ Rev. i. 6; v. 10.

something that we give or offer to God of our own. For, though we have nothing but what he first gives to us, yet when he hath given it to us, we have a civil right to it; it is our own in respect of all other men: but when we give it back again to God, divesting ourselves of our own right to it, and transferring it wholly to him, then he looks upon it as a sacrifice offered up to him, and is pleased to accept of it as such. Under the law God commanded that oxen, and sheep, and lambs, and such like living creatures, should be offered up in sacrifice to him, which, being killed by a priest, were consumed either by fire upon the altar, or else by those who waited at it, and so were fed, as it were, at God's table of such things as were offered to him. But these sacrifices being ordained only to foreshow and typify the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," they ceased, in course, when "he had offered up himself a sacrifice for our sins upon the cross." But now, under the Gospel, other kind of sacrifices are required of us. We are now commanded to "present our bodies as a living sacrifice⁹." Not to kill them, but to offer them up alive, as a "living sacrifice," by devoting ourselves wholly to the service of God, by "mortifying our members that are upon the earth¹," and "crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts²," by keeping our bodies under, and bringing them into subjection to our souls, by subduing our passions, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world³."

Hence all manner of good, pious, and charitable works, that are done in obedience to God, and for his service and honour, are now called "sacrifices." As where the apostle saith, that the things which the Philippians sent him were "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing unto God⁴." And "to do good," saith he, "and to communicate

⁹ Rom. xii. 1.¹ Col. iii. 5.² Gal. v. 24.³ Tit. ii. 12.⁴ Phil. iv. 18.

forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased⁵."

Indeed, under the law itself these were reckoned the best sort of sacrifices, and preferred before those that were ordained in the ceremonial law: "Behold," saith Samuel, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams⁶." "The sacrifices of God," saith David, "are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise⁷." "Wherewithal," saith the prophet, "shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, and calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God⁸?"

There are many such places in the Old Testament where this is so plainly revealed, that the scribe who talked with our Saviour could not but own, that for a man to love God "with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices⁹."

But sacrificing, in general, being a public owning of God, and his sovereignty over the world, whereby we openly testify our acknowledgment and belief, that he is the Almighty Creator, Possessor, and Governor of all things, and that we are obliged to him for all the blessings we enjoy; therefore by the sacrifices which are here said to be offered by the "holy priesthood" spoken of in my text, such duties seem to be more especially understood, whereby we now set forth the glory of God, by joining together in making our public profession of our dependence upon him, and our manifold obligations to him.

⁵ Heb. xiii. 16.

⁶ 1 Sam. xv. 22.

⁷ Ps. li. 17.

⁸ Mic. vi. 6—8.

⁹ Mark xii. 33.

Particularly our open or public praying to him, and to him alone, for all the good things that we want. For hereby we plainly discover that we believe him to be the Author and Giver of "every good and perfect gift:" that we neither have, nor can have, any thing but what we receive from him; and that he is so just and true to his word, that he will give us whatsoever he knows to be good for us, "if we ask it of him according to his will." And, therefore, under the law itself their public prayers always went along with their daily sacrifices both morning and evening, and were performed at the same time, even while the lamb was roasting upon the altar; and this was itself also reckoned as a sacrifice offered up to God. "Let my prayer," saith David, "be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice¹."

Especially considering that prayer always was, and ought to be, accompanied with praise and thanksgiving to God, which is so properly a sacrifice, that it is often called by that name. "I will offer," saith David, "to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving²." "And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing," or "singing³." And this, even in those days, was more acceptable unto God than all their other sacrifices. "I will praise the name of God," saith he, "with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs⁴." The apostle, also, to show that this is properly an evangelical sacrifice, such as St. Peter speaks of in my text, saith, "By him therefore," even by Christ, "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name⁵."

But the sacrifice that is most proper and peculiar to the Gospel is the sacrament of our Lord's Supper,

¹ Ps. cxli. 2.² Ps. cxvi. 17.³ Ps. cvii. 22.⁴ Ps. lxxix. 30, 31.⁵ Heb. xiii. 15.

instituted by our Lord himself, to succeed all the bloody sacrifices in the Mosaic law.

For, though we cannot say, as some absurdly do, that this is such a sacrifice whereby Christ is again offered up to God both for the living and the dead, yet it may as properly be called a sacrifice as any that was ever offered, except that which was offered by Christ himself; for his, indeed, was the only true expiatory sacrifice that was ever offered. Those under the law were only types of his; and were called sacrifices only upon that account, because they typified and represented that which he was to offer for the sins of the world: and, therefore, the sacrament of Christ's body and blood may as well be called by that name as they were. They were typical, and this is a commemorative sacrifice; they foreshowed the death of Christ to come: this shows forth his death already past: "For as often," saith the apostle, "as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come⁶." This is properly our Christian sacrifice, which neither Jews nor Gentiles can have any share in, as the apostle observes: "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat, which serve the tabernacle⁷;" an altar, where we partake of the great Sacrifice which the eternal Son of God offered up for the sins of the whole world, and ours among the rest, that Almighty God may be reconciled to us, and receive us again into his love and favour, and make us happy in the enjoyment of it for ever; which is so great a blessing, that they who really mind their own good and welfare, can no more forbear to partake of this Sacrament when they may, than they can forbear to eat when they are hungry, and have meat before them.

These are those spiritual sacrifices which the "holy priesthood," or whole body of saints, offer up to God. The apostle calls them "spiritual," in opposition to those "carnal sacrifices" that were offered by the Levitical

⁶ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

⁷ Heb. xiii. 10.

priesthood; and because they are of a spiritual nature, and performed in a spiritual manner, being offered up in the spirits of the saints as well as bodies; and by the Spirit of God himself dwelling in them, and so consecrating them a "spiritual house, an holy priesthood," and enabling them to offer up these sacrifices in the name of Christ, and through the merits of that Sacrifice which he hath offered for them: according to that of the apostle in the place before quoted, by him "therefore let us offer up the sacrifice of praise to God continually." It is by him only that they can be offered up so as to be acceptable unto God; and when they are offered up by him, they can be acceptable unto God no otherwise than by him too; as we are here taught by the apostle, saying, that these "spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

All that I have hitherto discoursed upon these words being only in order to clear the way for that which I chiefly designed in the choice of them, even to show how our spiritual sacrifices come to be acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (to our unspeakable comfort), I shall now, by his assistance, search into the bottom of it, and lay it as open as I can. For which purpose, we may first observe, that, by the Levitical law, when a man brought "an offering to the Lord," of his flock, or his herd, "the priest was to burn it all upon the altar;" and then it was said "to be a burnt-sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord⁸." What we translate "sweet savour," in the Hebrew is *רִיחַ נִיחֻחַ*, "a smell of rest:" such a smell, whereby God rested satisfied with the sacrifice from whence it came, instead of the death of the offerer, or such punishment as was due unto him for his sins. But he was first to "put his hand upon the head of his burnt-offering; and then," the text saith, "it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him⁹." The death of the sacrifice was accepted of, instead of the death which he must otherwise have

⁸ Lev. i. 9. 13.

⁹ Ver. 4.

suffered for his sin: so that God was thereby atoned or reconciled to him, and well-pleased again with him, as much as if he had not sinned; not by any virtue in the beast that was killed and burnt, but by reason of the typical relation it had to the sacrifice of the death of Christ, whereby he offered up himself in our stead, and so made an atonement, or propitiation, for our sins.

Now, as the apostle in my text calls our devotions and good works by the name of "sacrifices," so he asserts them to be acceptable to God, as the "legal sacrifices" were. St. Paul expresseth the same thing in the very words of the law, saying, that the good works of the Philippians were "an odour of a sweet smell." And then he explains it, by adding, that they "were a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God¹." And so all the good works that we sincerely perform in obedience to the will of God, although they are not absolutely perfect in themselves, yet he accepts of them as much as if they were, and is as well pleased with them, and with him that doth them. He looks upon them as good works, such as he would have us to do, and accordingly rewards us for them, by giving us those great blessings which he hath freely promised to those who obey and serve him. Thus, therefore, our "spiritual sacrifices" are here said to be acceptable to God; but not for any worth or value in themselves, but by Jesus Christ. To understand this we must consider,

1. There is nothing which we do that is acceptable or well-pleasing to God in itself: for God is pleased with nothing but what is exactly agreeable to his own will: but nothing that we do is so in all points; but, do what we can, we still fail either in the matter, or in the manner, or in the end, or in some circumstance or other; so that, as the wise man observes, "There is not a just man that doeth good, and sinneth not²;" not only that always doth good, and never sins, but that

¹ Phil. iv. 18.

² Eccles. vii. 20.

doth not sin in the good he doth, by not doing it as he ought in all respects. But nothing is good that is not all good,—without any failure or defect in it; which seeing nothing we do is: therefore nothing we do can be of itself acceptable to him, “who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,”—any iniquity,—without abhorrence and indignation.

In the next place we may observe that, as all our spiritual sacrifices are thus unclean in the sight of God, so it is not in the power of any, or all the creatures in the world to cleanse them, so as to make them acceptable to him, without Christ; neither is there salvation in any other: “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved³,” whereby we can be saved from the wrath of God, which is due to every sin and transgression of his law, one as well as another, to the defects and imperfections of our best actions, as well as to the worst that we ever did, or ever can do.

And, therefore, Christ himself saith, “That without him we can do nothing⁴,” nothing that is truly good, nothing that God will accept of without him: inso-much, that without him our whole lives are but as one continued sin and provocation against him, in whom we live; as they, who do not believe in him, will one day find by woful experience, notwithstanding all their pretensions to virtue and good works: for, whatsoever they may pretend, they can neither exercise any one virtue, nor do any one work that can be properly termed good, and therefore acceptable to God, without Christ.

But by him, St. Peter here saith, that our “spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God;” and so doth St. Paul, too, where he saith, that “we are accepted in the beloved⁵,” in him, of whom the Father said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased⁶.” This was proclaimed by a voice from heaven upon two

³ Acts iv. 12.

⁵ Eph. i. 6.

⁴ John xv. 5.

⁶ Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5.

several occasions,—at his Baptism, and at his Transfiguration; the better to assure us that he is the beloved Son, in whom God is pleased to manifest his love and favour to mankind: that, as “the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ⁷.” All the graces and mercy that we receive from God comes by him; particularly that whereby he is graciously pleased to accept of any thing that we sinful mortals do: and therefore, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle prays, that “God would make them perfect in every good work to do his will, working in them that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ⁸.” It is only through him that God enables us to do good works; and it is only through Him that the good works we do are well-pleasing unto God.

But how this comes to pass, that what we do should be acceptable to God by another, even by Jesus Christ, is a mystery which “the angels desire to look into,” and the more they look, the more they admire; and so shall we, if we do but cast our eye upon what is revealed of it in God’s holy word, where we find,

1. That this Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father; and that in the fulness of time he took upon him the form or nature of man, so as to be in one and the same person both God and man,—man in general; not only a particular human person, as every one of us is, but, as the “first man Adam” was, one in whom the whole nature of man is contained; who, therefore, is called also the “second man⁹ :” and “Adam,” that is, man in general, as the first was¹. But, with this mighty advantage, that the first was only man; the second not only man, but God too: God of the same nature with the Father, as well as man of the same nature with all other men.

2. We there find that, as the first man Adam, and

⁷ John i. 17.

⁹ 1 Cor. xv. 47.

⁸ Heb. xiii. 21.

¹ Ver. 45.

in him all mankind, broke the law of God, so the second kept it perfectly, never doing any one thing that was there forbidden, nor leaving any one thing undone that was there commanded. But “he went about” continually “doing good,” and “fulfilling all righteousness:” so that his whole life, as man, was one continued act of obedience to the will of God; which being performed by him in the whole nature of man, was as much as was required of all that are of that nature, and more too: forasmuch as no more was or could be required of all mankind, than the obedience of so many finite creatures; whereas it was the obedience of a Person that is infinite, and therefore infinitely surpassing all that could ever have been done by the whole race of mankind.

3. We there also find that he was thus obedient not only through the whole course of his life, but to death itself, “even the death of the cross².” He did not only suffer that accursed death, but he suffered it in perfect obedience to the will of God: but death being due only for sin, he, never having sinned, could not suffer it for himself; but, as he suffered it in the nature of man, so he suffered it for all that are of that nature. And, therefore, he is there said to have died for us, and for our sins; to have “tasted death for every man³,” and “to have given himself a ransom for all⁴,” for all of that nature in which he died: so that his death was a sufficient price for the redemption of all mankind; it being equivalent to the death of all men; and of infinitely greater worth and value, in that it was the death of an infinite Person.

4. We there find, also, that this Divine Person having thus suffered death in the nature of man, he in that rose again, went up into heaven, and is there exalted at the right hand of God, to be the “Mediator between God and men,” in whose nature he is now there, appearing “in the presence of God for us⁵,”

² Phil. ii. 8.

³ Heb. ii. 9.

⁴ 1 Tim. ii. 6.

⁵ 1 Tim. ii. 5. Heb. ix. 24.

“as the propitiation for our sins: and for the sins of the whole world⁶,” and “is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them⁷.”

Lastly, we find in holy writ, that they who believe in this Jesus Christ, are said to “be in him,” to “abide in him,” as a member in the body, or a branch in a tree, and so to “partake of him⁸,” and of all he did and suffered upon earth, and of all he is now doing in heaven; where he looks upon them as his own, his disciples, his servants, his friends, his brethren, his sheep, his peculiar people; and accordingly takes particular care of them, as their Saviour, their Mediator, and Advocate with the Father, interceding continually for them, and for them only: “I pray for them,” saith he; “I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine⁹.”

Now, these things being thus briefly laid down together, we may easily see how the spiritual sacrifices, which the spiritual house and holy priesthood, here spoken of, offer unto God, come to be acceptable to him by Jesus Christ. For this spiritual house being wholly made up of such as “come to Christ, and believe on him,” as we learn from the context¹; therefore they are built up in him, as St. Peter here saith; or, as St. Paul expresseth it, “In him they are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit².” So that they have a near relation to him, and an interest in him, and he in them; they are wholly his, and are actuated and influenced by that Holy Spirit that proceeds from him; as the members of a body are by the animal spirits that flow from the head³. It is by the Spirit of Christ, and so by Christ himself, that they offer all their spiritual sacrifices, and do all the good works that are required of them; according to that of the apostle, “I can do all things through

⁶ 1 John ii. 2.⁷ Heb. vii. 25.⁸ Heb. iii. 14.⁹ John xvii. 9.¹ Ver. 4. 6, 7.² Ephes. ii. 22.³ Rom. viii. 9. 13, 14.

Christ which strengtheneth me⁴.” But what is done by Christ or his Holy Spirit, is done by God himself. And so far as any thing is done by himself, so far be sure he is well-pleased with it, as he is with every thing which he himself doth. This, therefore, is one reason wherefore the spiritual sacrifices, which his people offer, are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,—because they are offered by Him, in whom God is well-pleased.

But although they be thus led by the Spirit of Christ, yet while they are in the body “the flesh lusteth against the spirit;” so that, do what they can, there are many blemishes and imperfections in their best sacrifices, which would hinder their being acceptable unto God, if Christ did not cover them with his own sacrifice. But he having offered up himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, by virtue of that he makes atonement and reconciliation for all the sins of those who believe in him, and particularly for the imperfections of their duties and performances: for which he himself hath borne the punishment, and therefore intercedes, that God would not be angry or displeased with them; but be graciously pleased to accept of the imperfect sacrifices which they offer him, for the sake of that absolutely perfect Sacrifice which he himself had offered in their stead. And hence it is, that Almighty God, having his Sacrifice always in his eye, overlooks the imperfections of theirs, and accepts of what they do through the merits of that death which his Only-begotten Son hath suffered for them.

But that nothing might be wanting to render the good works which his servants do by his assistance as acceptable to God through him as it is possible for them to be, he doth not only wash out their spots with his blood, but he adorns them also with his own righteousness,—that perfect righteousness which he fulfilled through the whole course of his life. For that

⁴ Phil. iv. 13.

also being, we have seen, performed in the whole nature of man, and therefore applicable to all that are of that nature, he accordingly applies it to all that by faith come unto him for it: as all his faithful people be sure do; as well as St. Paul, when he desired to “be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith⁵.” Where we see he desired, and accordingly had, another righteousness besides that of the law,—the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, “who knew no sin,” and yet “was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him⁶;” “who of God was made unto us righteousness as well as wisdom⁷,”—“The Lord our righteousness⁸.” So that we may every one say, “Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength⁹.” Strength to do good works, and righteousness to make them acceptable when they are done; as they may well be, seeing it is the righteousness of God himself, who is well-pleased with every thing that he himself doth, and with nothing else.

From hence, therefore, we may see how the sacrifices which his people offer, come to be acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, even because they are offered by the assistance of his Holy Spirit, cleansed by the merits of the death he suffered in their stead, and perfected by the righteousness which he himself performed in their nature. And being begun, continued, and finished in and by himself, he looks upon them as his own works, and is therefore well-pleased with them, as he was with every thing he made at first, when it was said, “That God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good.”

Now what a mighty encouragement is this to do all the good we can in the world! For who would not please Him that governs all things in it, and disposeth

⁵ Phil. iii. 9.

⁶ 2 Cor. v. 21.

⁷ 1 Cor. i. 30.

⁸ Jer. xxiii. 6.

⁹ Isa. xlv. 24.

of every thing as he himself pleaseth? And yet we see that we little, we sinful creatures upon earth may do such things as are acceptable and well-pleasing to the great God of heaven, though not in themselves, yet by his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: but for that purpose we must do all such good works as he hath set us. And “whatsoever we do in word or deed, we must do it in the name of the Lord Jesus:” believing and trusting on him to perfume it with the incense of his ointments, that so it may be acceptable to God by him, and then it will most certainly be so; for we have the word of God himself here for it, as we have now heard. And, therefore, when we have offered any sacrifice, or performed any service, to him, we ought not to doubt, but be fully persuaded in our minds, that although there be no merit, but many imperfections in it, yet that God is graciously pleased to accept of it, and will accordingly reward us for it, both in this world and the next, through the merits and mediation of his Son Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever.

SERMON III.

THE EFFICACY OF FAITH ON THE MINISTRATION OF THE WORD.

1 THESS. ii. 13.

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

“IN you that believe;” there lies the emphasis, and the foundation of all that I design at present to build upon these words. St. Paul having been at Thessalonica, and preached the word of God to the inhabitants of that city, many of them hearkened to what he said, not as spoken by a philosopher, but by an apostle sent from God; and therefore received it, not as “the word of men,” which may or may not be true, but as it really was, the infallible “word of God” himself. For this the apostle here tells them “he thanked God without ceasing,” ascribing it wholly to his power and goodness; and puts them withal in mind of two things: first, of the great force and efficacy which the word they so received had upon them: “the word of God,” saith he, “which effectually worketh in you.” It had, it seems, its whole effect, its end, its perfect work, upon them, insomuch that, as he saith in the following words, “they were now able to suffer as much for the sake of

Christ, as the Churches in Judea did." And then, secondly, he acquaints them also how the word of God came to have so much power upon them,—even because they believed it; "which effectually worketh," saith he, "in you that believe:" in you, and none else, and in you only as *believing* it, without which they could not have been wrought upon, nor would have received any benefit at all by it. According to that also of the Apostle to the Hebrews, where, speaking of the Gospel preached to the Jews under the law, he saith, "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it¹." But the apostle in my text speaks only in the present tense, ὃς ἐνεργεῖται, "which effectually worketh," not which wrought only when ye heard it, but doth so now, ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, "in you believing," or "that do believe." As if he had said, Seeing you still believe the word you heard, it still continues to "work effectually" in you.

I have been the more particular in explaining the words to you, that you may better see into the ground of what I would observe from them, which is, that the efficacy of God's holy word upon our minds depends upon our believing it; that whatsoever we hear can make no impressions at all upon us unless we believe it, nor any longer than we do believe it. But so long as we continue to believe what is preached to us out of God's word, so long it will work effectually in us, towards the bringing us out of darkness into light, from the power of Satan unto God.

The understanding of this will be of great use to show both where the fault lies, that so many in our age are no better for having the word of God so often preached to them, and also how we may be always the better for it: for which purpose, therefore, we shall, first, consider what we are to understand by the word of God; and then, what by believing it.

By the word of God, we are to understand the

¹ Heb. iv. 2.

whole system of divine revelations as they are now contained in the books of the Old and New Testament; "for all Scripture being given by inspiration of God²," it is all, one part as well as another, equally the word of God: so that we have the word of God himself, that whatsoever is there commanded, or forbidden, it is his will that we should, or should not, do it; that whatsoever is there threatened against impenitent sinners, or promised to the penitent, he himself will see it fulfilled; that whatsoever is there recorded to be said or done, was accordingly said or done, just as it is there recorded; that whatsoever is there foretold, shall certainly come to pass; and that whatsoever is there affirmed, is infallibly true, as being affirmed by him who cannot lie. And by our believing all this, we are to understand our being fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of it, in a manner suitable to the ground that we have for it,—even the word of God himself; which being the firmest ground we can have for any thing in the world, we ought to be persuaded in the highest manner that can be of every thing that is there written.

This being premised in general, it will be easy to demonstrate the truth of this proposition, That the word of God, howsoever it is preached or made known, effectually worketh in them that believe it. For we find, by constant experience, that a firm belief, or full persuasion, of any thing, even in this world, hath that power over our minds, that it carrieth all our affections after it. If we really believe a thing to be good for us, we cannot but love it, and desire it, and labour after it, and be glad when we have got it. If we really believe a thing to be evil or hurtful to us, we cannot but hate it, and abhor it, and shun it, and be troubled when it falls upon us: and this, although our belief or persuasion be grounded only upon our own fancies, or corrupt reason, or upon the testimony of our fellow-creatures upon earth; how much more,

² 2 Tim. iii. 16.

when it is grounded upon the testimony of God himself! "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater³." It is, indeed, the greatest that can be in the world. And, therefore, such things as God himself hath attested, and we accordingly believe as we ought upon his testimony or witness, must needs prevail the most powerfully upon us, and work the most effectually in us, that it is possible for any thing in the world to do.

To make this the more plain and easy to be understood, I shall briefly run through the several parts of God's holy word, and show how each of them operates upon a believing mind. Now all that is there written may be reduced to these few heads; commands, threatenings, promises, histories, predictions, and affirmations. Every one of which hath its proper and peculiar way of working upon the minds of men, but they all do it effectually in those who believe.

1. By the commands, I mean all such moral laws and precepts which are recorded in Holy Scripture, as enacted by God himself, or, which is the same, by his Holy Spirit in the Prophets and Apostles. All which laws have equally their authority and sanction from the supreme Lawgiver, the universal Governor of the world, who hath been pleased to make and publish them, that all mankind might know how to govern themselves, their thoughts, their words, and their actions, all according to his divine will and pleasure. Now when we read or hear of any of these commandments, if at the same time we firmly believe, and are fully persuaded in our minds, that they are prescribed to us by the Almighty Creator, Preserver, and Disposer of all things in the world; our consciences must needs be touched, and our hearts affected with a quick sense of the many obligations that lie upon us to observe them with an holy fear, lest we should ever break them, and with steady resolutions to keep them as punctually as we can: as we see in the chil-

³ 1 John v. 9.

dren of Israel, when the law was proclaimed upon mount Sinai with thunders, and lightnings, and other demonstrations of the divine glory and greatness, whereby the people were convinced that it was indeed the law of God, and that he himself proclaimed it; how were they terrified at it, and resolved to keep it! They desired to see no more such terrible sights, but were ready now to do whatsoever Moses should tell them was the will of God. For they said to him, "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it⁴." So effectually did the word of God work in them, so long as they believed it: and so it doth in all that hear of the laws of God, so long as they really believe them to be his; as all the moral commandments are which we find written in the Holy Scriptures, although they were not promulged in such an extraordinary and astonishing manner as the ten were upon mount Sinai, but by the still voice of his Holy Spirit in the Prophets. They are all equally the commands of Almighty God; which whosoever believes, when he hears them delivered and made known to him, he must needs receive them with that reverence and godly fear, that will work up his mind into fervent desires and sincere endeavours to observe and keep them. Insomuch that he, who is not so wrought upon by them, may be confident, that, whatsoever he may think or say, he is not fully persuaded that they are the laws of the supreme Judge and Governor of the world; if he was, he would soon find them working effectually in him.

2. Especially if he considers, withal, the penalty which God hath threatened against those who break his laws,—nothing less than death itself. When God commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he told him at the same time, "that in the day that he ate thereof he should

⁴ Deut. v. 27.

surely die⁵.” Which if Adam had believed, he would never have eaten of that tree. And, therefore, the serpent had no other way to prevail with him to do it, but by persuading him that “he should not die⁶.” So it is to this day; in that God was pleased to threaten the first sin with death, he thereby sufficiently declared that all sin should be punished with death, which the Apostle therefore saith, “is the wages of sin⁷,” of sin in general, one as well as another. God hath threatened death against every sin,—death in its fullest extent and latitude, as comprising under it all the curses and miseries that mankind is capable of. Hence it is, that he denounced so many curses against those “who would not observe to do whatsoever he had commanded⁸.” And how exactly they were all executed upon the children of Israel, may easily appear to any one that compares what Moses hath there written with what Josephus hath recorded, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, in his History of the Jewish war; where we find all the curses which are there threatened so literally fulfilled upon that sinful nation, that it may serve as a comment upon the aforesaid text. And howsoever other people may flatter themselves for a while with the hopes of impunity for their sins, notwithstanding that they continue in them, the curse of God will most certainly one time or other fall upon them for it: nay, it is upon them already; for God hath said, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them⁹.” They are already cursed, whether they see it or no; and they shall find they are so, whether they will or no, when Christ shall say to them, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels¹.” For this we have the word of God himself, which if men did really believe, how effec-

⁵ Gen. ii. 17.

⁷ Rom. vi. 23.

⁹ Gal. iii. 10; Deut. xxvii. 26.

⁶ Gen. iii. 4.

⁸ Deut. xxviii.

¹ Matt. xxv. 41.

tually would it work in them! It would soon turn their stomachs against all manner of sin, as that which brings the curse of God upon them, and so is the only cause of all the troubles they meet with in this world; and, without sincere repentance, will ruin and destroy them for ever.

3. The same may be said of the promises which God hath made to those who keep his laws, which are so many and so great, that, if men did but really believe them, they would need no other arguments to persuade them to do whatsoever he hath commanded: for to those who do so he hath promised all the good, all the best things, yea, all things that are in the world, "all shall be theirs²," "and all shall work together for their good³." And who can forbear to do that which he believes will do him good, although it be only one particular good, and although he hath no other ground to believe it, but because a wise and an honest man, as he supposes, hath told him so? How much more, when the all-wise, almighty, all-good and gracious God hath said, that they who obey and serve him shall have all the good things they can desire! As we have all the ground that can be to believe it, so no man can really believe it, but he must needs strive all he can to obey and serve him; which whosoever doth not do, whatsoever he may pretend, I am sure he doth not truly believe God's word; for "true faith worketh by love⁴." But "love is the fulfilling of the whole law⁵." And, therefore, he that doth not endeavour to the utmost of his power to fulfil the whole law of God, we may be confident that he doth not truly believe his word and promise to them that do so; and that is the reason, the only reason, that it hath no effect upon him.

But in those who believe it works so effectually, that it puts them upon constant endeavours to do what-

² 1 Cor. iii. 21.

⁴ Gal. v. 6.

³ Rom. viii. 28.

⁵ Rom. xiii. 10; Gal. v. 14.

soever God hath commanded; it inspires them with courage and resolution in it; it keeps them “stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord⁶.” They know, they are sure, that all the pains they take for him will turn to good account for themselves: they have God’s word for it, the best security in the world; and, therefore, they never think that they can lay out too much upon it.

And as the word and promise of God animates and encourageth those who believe to obey him in all things which he hath commanded, so it enables them also to put their whole trust and confidence on him for all things that he hath promised, that is, for all things that can any way conduce to their good and welfare: by which means, whatsoever happens, their hearts are always fixed, trusting in the Lord to defend and keep them according to his word, which they are confident can never fail; as we see in the Apostle, God hath said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee: so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me⁷.” So in all the promises which God hath made, they who believe can boldly say, that he will make them good. This is that faith which is so acceptable to God, that by it we are accepted of as righteous before him, through his beloved Son, in whom all his promises are made and confirmed to us: as when God had made a promise to Abraham, it is said, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness⁸.” Not that we can believe, and not do the works of God, as I have already shown; but because when we have done all we can, our works are so imperfect, that we cannot be accounted righteous for them; and therefore God is graciously pleased to accept of our faith in his promises, and in his Son, in whom they are made; and to count that for righteousness to us, in that we are thereby interested in all the merits of our Blessed

⁶ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

⁷ Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

⁸ Rom. iv. 5.

Saviour, in whom we believe, and by whom we are, therefore, justified before God. So effectually do the promises of God work in them who believe and trust on them, that they are thereby both made and accounted righteous, and so are meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Neither doth the historical part of the Holy Scriptures want its influence and energy in those who receive it as attested by God himself, and accordingly believe it. When we read there, how God made the world, and what great things he hath since done in it; if we really believe it, we must needs be struck with such an admiration of his infinite wisdom and power, as will make us fall down and worship him. When we read or hear of the dreadful judgments which he hath inflicted upon obstinate sinners; if we really believe it, we cannot but dread the thoughts of falling under his displeasure, and so live in fear all our life-long. When we read or hear of the great deliverances he hath wrought, and the wonderful works that he hath done for his faithful people and servants in all ages; if we really believe it, we shall be thereby inflamed with holy desires to be in the number of his faithful servants, and encouraged to trust on him, and to hope that he will do as much for us, if there be occasion. When we read or hear of the great sins which the best of men have sometimes fallen into; if we really believe it, our hearts must needs be touched with the conscience of our own infirmities, and of the necessity of observing what the apostle hath taught us in that case; "Be not highminded, but fear⁹." When we read or hear of the great troubles and afflictions which God's own people have met with in this world, if we really believe it, we shall the more cheerfully undergo whatsoever he shall be pleased to lay upon us, and, with Moses, "choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season¹." When we read or hear of the

⁹ Rom. xi. 20.

¹ Heb. xi. 25.

virtues and good works, for which the saints of old are commended by God himself; as, that Enoch walked with God; that Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; that Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory unto God; that Job was not only patient, but thankful for all his troubles; that Moses was the meekest man upon earth; that David was a man after God's own heart; that Zacharias and Elisabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless;—and the like: if we really believe it, what an emulation will it raise in us to come as near them as possibly we can! Especially the life and death of our Blessed Saviour, who did none, and yet suffered all manner of evil; if we really believe it, it would not only make us ashamed of our former sins, but careful for the future to walk in his steps.

But as to what is recorded concerning our Blessed Saviour, I shall have occasion to speak more particularly of that afterwards; as likewise of the prophecies or predictions that are not yet fulfilled. Wherefore passing by those which are fulfilled already, and so are a great confirmation of our faith in God's word, I shall haste to the last of these heads, to which I said whatsoever is contained in it may be referred, which I called affirmations: by which I mean, whatsoever is affirmed in the Holy Scriptures concerning God the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost, or any other truth that is there revealed, on purpose that we might believe it. For whatsoever is so affirmed, if we accordingly believe it, it will work so effectually in us, as to cleanse our hearts from all erroneous and corrupt opinions, and fill them with a due sense and right notions of divine things, according to that of St. Peter, where he saith, that "God purified their hearts by faith²."

4. To make this as plain and practical as I can, that ye may not only understand, but experience in your-

² Acts xv. 9.

selves, what power this part of God's holy word hath upon them who believe, I shall briefly run through the articles of our Christian faith, as they are contained in the Apostles' Creed, and show how every one hath its particular influence, and all work together to cleanse and purify the hearts of those who believe, to take them off from all gross and sensible objects, and to fix them upon God, and the concerns of another life. I know there are other great truths revealed in the Holy Scriptures, which are not expressly named in that Creed. But I shall only instance in those that are there expressed, because that is the Creed which I suppose you can all say, you all profess to believe it, and it is that which we repeat every day in our public devotions. And, therefore, it will be of great use to understand how you ought to be, and how you will be affected with every article that is in it, if you actually believe it, whensoever ye hear or say it: and, by consequence, how proper it is to repeat and exercise our faith upon that Creed in our daily prayers.

First, therefore, "He that cometh unto God must believe that he is³." And accordingly our Creed begins with, "I believe in God the Father Almighty:" "In God," the Lord, the Lord of Hosts; Jehovah, Jah, Being, Glory, Goodness, Purity, Excellency, Super-excellency, Perfection itself, existing in and of Himself, "God blessed for ever." And who can believe there is such a glorious, amiable, infinite, incomprehensible, eternal Being, and not love and honour him? Who can believe in him, and not adore and serve him with reverence and godly fear? It is impossible. Such a belief of God would raise up our hearts, and incline all the powers of our souls to him, and fix them so firmly upon him, that nothing would be able to withdraw them from him. And if we believe in God the Father, we must needs believe he hath a Son, eternally begotten of him, otherwise he could not be the Father; which, by consequence, must needs work so effectually in us,

³ Heb. xi. 6.

as to confirm and settle us in the belief of the Divinity of our Blessed Saviour, and of the most glorious Trinity, the foundation of our whole religion, and of all our hopes and expectations from it. But if we believe also that this God the Father is Almighty, that he can do whatsoever he pleaseth, whensoever, wheresoever, and howsoever he pleaseth to do it; that nothing can resist his will, all things being infinitely below him, and entirely subject to him: who can imagine, but they who feel it, what impressions such a faith would make upon our hearts? It would cut us to the quick with fear of offending, and desires of pleasing God Almighty above all things in the world, as believing that nothing can do us either good or hurt, but just as he pleaseth: especially if we go on to believe, that this God the Father Almighty, is the "Maker of heaven and earth;" that he made the sun, the moon, and all the planets and fixed stars, with every thing that is in them, upon them, about them, above them, or beyond them, farther than our very thoughts can reach; that he made the heaven of heavens, with all the angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim, and all the pure and spotless, glorious and most perfect creatures that reside there; that he made the earth and the sea, with all things that are therein: and that he did not only thus make all things at first, but he is still, he is always, the Maker of them, continually upholding them in their being; ordering, and disposing, and governing them, as he himself sees good. Who can believe this, and not admire the glory of that infinite wisdom, and power, and goodness that shineth forth in the whole creation? who can believe this, and not cry out, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created⁴." "Allelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, let us rejoice and be glad, and give honour to him⁵." "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to

⁴ Rev. iv. 11.

⁵ Rev. xix. 6, 7.

whom be glory for ever. Amen ⁶.” And as we believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, so also “in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord:” that he is Jesus, that is, as the name imports, the Saviour, the only Saviour we have in all the world; that this Jesus is the Christ, “the anointed” of God, to be a Priest, a Prophet, and a King, in order to his accomplishing our salvation: that this Jesus Christ is the only Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, of the same nature and substance with him; and that he is the Lord of the whole world, and in a particular manner our Lord and Governor. Could we live with a constant belief of all this, how happy should we then be! Then we should put our whole trust and confidence in Jesus, and in him alone, for all things necessary for our salvation: then we should apply ourselves to Christ upon all occasions, as our Priest, to make atonement for us; as our Prophet, to instruct us; and as our King, to defend and govern us. Then the only Son of God would be our only joy and comfort; so that our souls would always magnify the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour. Then we should submit unto the will of Christ our Lord, and strive above all things to serve, and please, and obey him, and so should always live under his conduct and protection.

“Who,” as it follows in the Creed, “was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary:” that is, who, being in the form of God, took upon him the form of a servant, or became man too, by being conceived, not in the ordinary way as other men are, but by the Holy Ghost himself, and born as miraculously of a pure Virgin, the Virgin Mary, of the stock of David; so that both his conception and birth were supernatural and miraculous, as being effected by the immediate power of God himself. Which is such an article of our faith, that, if firmly believed, it would make us astonished at the infinite love of God to

⁶ Rom. xi. 36.

mankind, that he himself should become man, and for that purpose alter the whole course of natural causes, which he hath settled in the world, and all to reconcile himself to mankind, and mankind unto himself. Who can believe this, and not love that God who so loved us, as to be conceived by his own Holy Spirit, and born of a Virgin, and all to redeem and save us?

But how did this wonderful Person, this God-man, redeem and save us? That we are taught in the next words of the Creed: he “suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, he descended into hell.” He suffered all the punishments which the law of God had threatened against the sins of men; he suffered shame and reproach in his glorious name; he suffered pain and anguish in his body; he suffered grief and sorrow in his soul. This he suffered under Pontius Pilate, a Roman governor, and, therefore, suffered all that cruel and accursed death which the Romans inflicted upon notorious malefactors; he was crucified, his hands and feet were nailed to a cross, and there he hung till he gave up the ghost and died, and so offered up himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; and being dead, his body was buried, or laid in the grave, and his soul went down to hell, not to suffer there, but to show that he had suffered enough already, and that the gates of hell could have no more power over him or his. For he had now overcome the devil, and therefore triumphed over him in his own kingdom.

Is it possible really to believe all this, and yet not be affected with it?—to believe that the only-begotten Son of God suffered so much for our sins, and yet continue in them? to believe that he was crucified for us, and yet we not crucify our flesh with the affections and lusts? to believe that he died in our stead, and yet not live to his honour and glory? to believe that he was buried, and yet we not be “buried with him by baptism into death⁷?” to believe that

⁷ Rom. vi. 4.

he went down into hell, and yet that we should walk in the ways that lead thither? that he hath overcome the devil, and yet we should be overcome by him? It is impossible. Men may talk of what Christ suffered, and profess to believe it, and yet be never the better for it: but if they did believe what they profess, if they really believed that such an extraordinary Person suffered in such an extraordinary manner for sin, yea, and for their sins too, it must needs work in them true repentance, not to be repented thereof; so as to make them not only ashamed of their former sins, and heartily sorry for them, but stedfastly resolved to walk for the future in newness of life. They would never think they can do enough for him, who hath done and suffered so much for them,

But what saith our Blessed Lord in David? "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption⁸." And, accordingly, though he was crucified, dead, and buried, and went down into hell, yet, as it follows in the Creed, "the third day he rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead." We heard before how low Christ humbled himself for us; and here we see how highly he is now exalted by the Father; and all for us too. The third day after his soul and body were separated upon the cross, they were united together again, and so he revived or rose again to life, and soon after went up in both so united into heaven, and was there set "at the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him⁹." Neither was he only thus set at the right hand of God, at his first going into heaven, but, as it is in the Creed, he sitteth there now, as "head over all things to the Church¹⁰," as King of kings, and Lord of lords, vested with an absolute authority over the whole creation,

⁸ Ps. xvi. 10; Acts ii. 31.

⁹ 1 Pet. iii. 22.

¹⁰ Eph. i. 12.

and, as the true High-Priest, appearing in the presence of God, making atonement and reconciliation for all that believe in him, by virtue of that blood which he shed for the sins of the whole world when he was upon earth. And that seems to be the reason why, in the Revelation, he is all along represented as a Lamb sitting upon his throne; because he sits there as the Lamb that offered up himself for the sins of the world, and by virtue of that one oblation of himself once offered he is continually propitiating or reconciling his Father, and so interceding with him for all his faithful people, that their sins may be pardoned, and their persons accepted of, or accounted righteous before God. This he always did; is still doing at this very moment; and so will be to the end of the world, when he will come to earth again, and summon all mankind that ever lived, together with those which shall be then alive, to appear before him, and will pass his final sentence upon every one, "according to that he hath done in the body, whether it be good or evil¹."

I hope I need not tell you, that, if ye believed all this, it would work effectually in you; you could not surely but feel it in yourselves: for I speak to them who believe,—Did not your hearts even burn within you, while you heard what a glorious Saviour ye have in heaven? Do not your souls leap for joy, that ye have such an Advocate ever living to make intercession for you? Do not you still find yourselves refreshed and cheered at the hearing, that he who loved you so well as to lay down his life for you, is now at the right hand of God, and hath all things in heaven and earth entirely at his command? Hath it not made you ready to praise and magnify his name, and to join with the choir of heaven in singing, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever?" And when you heard that this glorious Person will

¹ 2 Cor. v. 10.

² Rev. v. 13.

come one day to judge all mankind, and you among the rest, did not this stir up in you good desires and holy resolutions to prepare yourselves for that great account you must then give to him? If you found no such effect in yourselves upon the hearing of these fundamental articles of our religion, you may conclude that you do not believe them; for if you did, you would not only have felt all that I have said, but far more than I am able to express.

The same may be said of all the other articles which remain. If you believed "in the Holy Ghost," the Lord and the giver of life, and of all grace and holiness, you could never hear of him, but you would immediately lift up your hearts to him, to be quickened, and sanctified, or made holy, by him. If you believed "the Holy Catholic Church," or the congregation of all Christian people, without which there is no salvation, according to that of the apostle, "The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved³," if you believed this, I say, you could never hear of Christ's Church, but it would fill your hearts with joy and thankfulness to God, that you are admitted into it, and strengthen your resolutions of living so as that you may be saved in it. If you believed "the communion of saints," that there is a society or company of persons in the world, which God is pleased to account real saints, his own faithful servants, his elect and peculiar people, which he hath a special love for, and takes particular care of, both in this world and the next; did you believe this whensoever you hear of it, it would put you upon longing and striving all ye can to be in the number of those blessed souls, "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God⁴," and "so meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light⁵."

If you believed "the forgiveness of sins," that, upon your repentance and conversion unto God, your sins will be all pardoned by the blood of Christ; every time

³ Acts ii. 47.

⁴ Eph. ii. 19.

⁵ Col. i. 12.

you hear of it, it would work more and more upon you, to turn you "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that ye may receive this forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus ⁶."

If you believed "the resurrection of the body," that although your bodies must return to the earth, out of which they were taken, yet they shall be raised up again to stand before Christ's tribunal, whensoever you hear of it, it would make you more careful to live in your bodies, so as that you may not be afraid either to lay them down, or take them up again.

And as for "life everlasting," if you really believed that "the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal ⁷," what a mighty change would it make in you, whensoever you hear of it! It would make you dread the thoughts of continuing in a state of wickedness, and resolve for the future to devote yourselves wholly to the service of Almighty God, that when you go out of this wicked and naughty world, you may live with Christ and his holy angels in perfect glory and happiness for ever.

Thus effectually do the plain articles of our religion work upon them that believe; and so doth the whole word of God: as I doubt not but many here present have found by their own experience, who when they have heard any part of it revealed to them, upon their believing and receiving it, "as it is in truth the word of God," they have felt it to be, as the apostle saith, "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart ⁸." It comes upon them like fire upon tinder, or such combustible matter, where it immediately catcheth, and spreadeth itself all over it. Whereas upon those who do not believe, it falls like a spark into water; it is no sooner

⁶ Acts xxvi. 18.

⁷ Matt. xxv. 46.

⁸ Heb. iv. 12.

there, but it is out. And that is the great reason why so many hear the word of God, and yet are never the better for it; because, whatsoever they may profess, they are not fully persuaded of it, they do not really believe it with such a faith as is due to the infallible word and testimony of God himself; no, not so much as they believe what they see or hear, or is told them by fallible men. And then it is no wonder that it makes no impression upon them: it is impossible it should, both from the nature of the thing itself, and from the just judgment of God upon them for not believing what he himself hath said.

But let others do what they please, let us do what we profess; even believe whatsoever God hath revealed to us in his holy word; that whensoever we hear, or so much as think of it, his grace may set it home upon our hearts, and make it “work effectually” in us; that it may be always profitable to us “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that we may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works⁹.” And, for that purpose, let us be always thinking of God’s word, and ruminate by faith so long upon it, that it may be digested into proper food and nourishment for our souls, that we may “grow thereby in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ¹.” That, whilst others live only by sense, or fancy, or, at the best, by corrupt and carnal reason, so as to be moved and acted only by them in every thing they do, we may for the future live by the faith of the Son of God, and with a constant belief of those great truths which he hath revealed to us, as the great principle of our life and actions.

What holy and heavenly lives should we then live! Then we should repent of all our sins, because it is written in God’s word, that “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish².” Then we should take care of

⁹ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 18.

² Luke xiii. 3. 5.

every thing we do, because it is written, "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil³." Then we should refrain, not only from profane, but idle talk, because it is written, that "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment⁴." Then we should be humble and lowly in our own eyes, because it is written, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble⁵." Then we should strive all we can to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless, because it is written, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him⁶." Then we should love the world no longer, because it is written, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him⁷." Then we should never "forsake the assembling of ourselves together," but should take all opportunities of joining in the public worship of God, because it is written, "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them⁸." Then we should not be cast down at any chastisement or afflictions that God is pleased to lay upon us, because it is written, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth⁹." Then we should never despair of God's mercy in the pardon of our sins, because it is written, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins¹." Then we should press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, because it is written, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne²."

³ Eccles. xii. 14.⁵ 1 Pet. v. 5.⁷ 1 John ii. 15.⁹ Heb. xii. 6.⁴ Matt. xii. 36.⁶ John xiv. 21.⁸ Matt. xviii. 20.¹ 1 John ii. 1, 2.² Rev. iii. 21.

Yet, could we always live with a firm belief of what is written in God's holy word, we should live in the other world while we are in this; "our conversation would be always in heaven;" our thoughts and affections would be still running upon Almighty God as present with us, or upon our Saviour as interceding for us, or upon the work that he hath set us, or upon the account that we must give him of it, or upon the reward that he hath promised to those who do it faithfully, or upon something or other which we find there written; and so should steer an even course through all the changes and chances of this mortal life, till we come to the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, through Jesus Christ our only Saviour, "to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen."

Now these things being thus plainly laid down before you, give me leave to deal freely with you concerning what you have now heard; for it concerns you all very much, infinitely more than any thing in this world can do. You cannot surely but know, that "without faith it is impossible to please God;" that your sins can never be pardoned, nor your souls ever saved, without it. Now by what you have now heard you may easily perceive whether you have true faith or no, whether you believe the Gospel, as you are there required, to the saving of your souls. For if the word preached makes no impression upon you; if you hear sermon after sermon, as many do, to our shame be it spoken, and yet be never the wiser nor the better for it; if you be not "doers of the word, but hearers only, deceiving your own souls;" you may then conclude, that, notwithstanding your profession of the Gospel, you do not believe it. You believe it no more than they who do not so much as profess it, and therefore are as yet in the same deplorable condition with them, even in "the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." But if "the word preached work effectually" in you; if it stirs up your hearts, and strengthens your resolutions to obey it; if it puts you upon constant and sincere

endeavours to live according as you are there taught; you have then good ground to believe that you do really believe it, and shall as certainly obtain what is there promised, as you sincerely perform what is commanded in it.

Wherefore, in the name of Christ our Saviour, I beseech you all not to satisfy yourselves any longer with the bare hearing of God's word; but, whensoever you hear it read or preached to you, "receive it as it is in truth the word of God," and act your faith accordingly upon it, that so it may "work effectually" in you, both while you hear it, and whensoever you call it to mind again. As, for example, you have lately heard how you ought to worship and glorify God, and how to serve him daily in his house of prayer, and often at his holy table; these things have been plainly delivered to you out of God's own word. Now, though you have hitherto seemed not to regard God's holy word, nor so much as to believe it to be his word, in that you have not done it; yet now that you are put in mind of it again, "shew your faith by your works," manifest to the world, and to your own consciences, that you believe God's word, by your constant performing the foresaid duties, and whatsoever else you hear to be there required of you. And whensoever you have the Gospel preached to you, do but receive it with faith, and you cannot but receive benefit and comfort from it: then every sermon you hear will do you good, and you will have cause to thank God for it; and so shall we also who preach God's word unto you: for then we may truly say to you, as the apostle here saith to the Thessalonians; "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

SERMON IV.

THE SACERDOTAL BENEDICTION IN THE NAME OF THE
TRINITY.

2 COR. xiii. 14.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.”

It would be great rashness in us, who know so little of our own, to inquire into the nature of him that made us, any further than he himself hath been pleased to make it known unto us in his holy word. But it would be the height of impudence and presumption to offer at explaining the incomprehensible mystery of the most glorious Trinity; how three distinct Persons subsist in the same individual nature, so as to be all one and the same God. It is sufficient for us to believe what is written, that there is but one living and true God; that “the Lord our God is one”¹ Jehovah, one being. That the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, these three, are one being, one Jehovah, one God; that the Father is of himself, the Son of the Father, the Holy Ghost of the Father and the Son, and yet none before or after other, none greater or less than another; but the whole three Persons co-eternal together, and co-equal. This we are bound to believe, because it is revealed by God himself, and,

¹ Deut. vi. 4.

therefore, revealed by him, that we may believe it upon his word, although it be above the reach of our finite understandings, as he himself knows it is; and, therefore, doth not require us to understand, but to believe it: and hath made known as much of it as he thought good, for that purpose only, that we might know what he would have us to believe concerning it.

Now, one very remarkable thing revealed in the Holy Scriptures concerning the most glorious Trinity is this, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, although they be all one and the same God, yet they often exert and manifest themselves and their divine perfections severally, as well as jointly, and so have their several ways of working in the world; as appears from many places, and particularly from the words I have now read: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." For here we have three divine Persons distinctly named: the Son, called the Lord Jesus Christ; the Father, here called in an especial manner God, as being the root and fountain of the Deity, as the primitive writers style him; and then here is the third Person, expressly called the Holy Ghost. And to each of these Persons here is a several property or perfection attributed, the apostle wishing to the Corinthians the grace of one, the love of another, and the communion of the third: which does not only shew that they are three distinct Persons or subsistencies, but also that they have distinct operations, or their several ways of working and manifesting themselves in the world. Which, if rightly understood, would give us great light into what we ought to believe concerning each Person; and how we ought to exercise our faith upon all and every one of them, according to the discoveries which they are pleased to make of themselves, with respect to us. And, therefore, I shall endeavour to explain it as clearly as I can, being a matter of so high a nature; humbly beseeching him, of whom I speak, so to assist and

direct me, that I may say nothing but what is agreeable to his holy word, and becoming his divine majesty.

For this purpose, therefore, we must first consider, in general, that this Almighty, most glorious, and eternal Being, which we call God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, hath been graciously pleased to shew forth and manifest himself and his divine perfections many wonderful ways, particularly in the creation and redemption of the world. In the first he manifested his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness; in the other his infinite love, and justice, and mercy, and truth to mankind; in both the infinite glory of his eternal Godhead. And it is much to be observed, that in both these great works that he hath done, whereby to set forth his glory, we find three distinct Persons specified, or particularly named by himself, as concurring in the doing of them, and each in a way peculiar to himself. The account that he himself hath given us of his creation or production of all things out of nothing begins thus; "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Where the word in the original, אֱלֹהִים, which we translate "God," is of the plural number; but it is joined with a verb of the singular, as it is almost every where in the Old Testament. Now although I will not say that an argument can be drawn from hence to convince a gainsayer that there are just three Persons in the Godhead, because a word of the plural number may possibly signify more: yet seeing that in Hebrew, where there is likewise a dual, three is the first plural number; and seeing the first must in reason be preferred before all other; and seeing God himself hath in many places of his word acquainted us that there are three Persons, and no more, in his Godhead; we may reasonably from hence infer, that God calleth himself by this name of the plural, and joins it with verbs and adjectives of the singular number, on purpose to put us in mind of the Trinity in Unity, that he is three in one, and that every one of these divine Persons is to be

adored and worshipped alike ; that being, as I take it, the true notion of the word. For though the root from whence אֱלֹהַּ "Eloah" comes, be not preserved in the Hebrew tongue, it is in the Arabic dialect ; where اَلٰه "Alaha," signifies "to worship, or adore:" and accordingly אֱלֹהַּ "Eloah," signifies "one that is to be worshipped;" and in the plural number אֱלֹהִים "Elohim," "Persons adorable," such as are and ought to be worshipped by all things that are ; as he, to be sure, ought to be, by whom all things were made, and were made by him for that end, that he might be worshipped by them. And it is very observable that in the next chapter, when the creation was finished, he is called by two names, יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים, the one of the singular number, the other of the plural ; the one signifying his essence, the other the Persons subsisting in it. But in all the first chapter of Genesis, while he was doing this great work, he is not so much as once called by any other name than אֱלֹהִים "adorandi," or "adorabiles," "persons to be adored;" but by that he is called above thirty times in that one chapter : whereby, I humbly conceive, he hath signified his pleasure to us, that when we consider his creation of the world, we should ascribe it to all the three Persons, and adore them for it. And, indeed, that they were all concerned in it appears from the history of the creation itself ; wherein although the Creator, as I have shewn, be all along called אֱלֹהִים, "Elohim," divine Persons in the plural number ; yet that name being as constantly there joined with a verb of the singular number, the unity of the divine nature, or Godhead, is likewise signified by it. In which sense it is said in the second verse, "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters:" that is, the Spirit of that One God, who is Elohim, divine Persons ; of which the Spirit here spoken of must needs be one, forasmuch as he operates in the creation, which none but God the Creator could do. So that we have here two distinct Persons, the Spirit of God, and God himself, whose

Spirit he is, even the Father; who, as I observed before, is in an especial manner often called God.

After this we read, that God made all things by his word: "He said, Let there be light: and there was light²." And so he made his works all the six days, until he came to make man, he made them all by his word: not by any outward word spoken, but by speaking in himself, by willing them to be, and so by his inward, his essential Word; that is, by his eternal and only-begotten Son, as we are fully assured by his evangelist St. John, who, by his direction, begins the Gospel of his Son Jesus Christ with this character of him: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made³." And to the same purpose St. Paul, speaking of the Son of God, saith, "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in the earth, visible or invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him⁴." And, elsewhere, "By whom he made the worlds⁵." From all which it appears, that the Word by which God made the world was his only Son, then with him: if his Son, then a Person; and if with him, then a distinct Person from him. So that now we plainly see three distinct Persons manifesting themselves in the creation of the world; God the Father, his Son, and his Spirit: as the royal prophet also long ago observed, saying, "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath (or Spirit) of his mouth⁶."

To this we may add that remarkable passage which occurs in the formation of man, as both explaining and

² Gen. i. 3.

³ John i. 1—3.

⁴ Col. i. 16; Eph. iii. 9.

⁵ Heb. i. 7.

⁶ Ps. xxxiii. 6.

confirming all that hath been hitherto said: for upon the sixth or last day of the creation, when God was pleased to make man, it is written; "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness⁷." In the original it is וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, "And God," in the plural number, "said" in the singular, he said, "Let us make man," and let us make him "in our image, after our likeness;" still in the plural number: which shews as plainly as words can do it, that several Persons concurred in this great work; and that they had all one and the same image and likeness, and therefore were of one and the same nature or essence. Neither can the words possibly bear any other sense: all that the Jews and Socinians have said upon them, according to their blasphemous doctrine, makes them downright nonsense; whereas, according to our Christian doctrine, nothing is more plain and easy. For when the most blessed Trinity was pleased to make man, the chief and lord of all earthly creatures, he did not say, as in the making of other creatures, Let there be a man; but, Let us, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, make man, and let us make him as like unto ourselves, who are all of the same likeness, as a creature can be made. All which might be, as in effect it was, most truly and properly said, according to our common way of speaking: whereas if there were not several divine Persons then in being, or but only one, to whom could God say, "Let us make man?" Who but a divine Person could do such a work? Or how could he say, "Let us make him in our image, after our likeness," if there was only one Person in the world, in whose image and likeness he could be made? No, all the wit of man, and of the devil himself, can never invalidate the invincible force of this place, to prove that there were several divine Persons of the same divine essence, that severally exerted and discovered themselves in the creation of the world in general, and particularly in the making of mankind.

And as it was in the creation, so it was likewise in

⁷ Gen. i. 20.

the redemption of mankind: the world was made by the Word of God, and it was redeemed by the same Word, the Son of God, the second of the divine Persons, which St. John calls "the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost⁸." All which, as I have shewn, co-operated in the making of man at first; and so they did too in the saving and redeeming of him, when he was fallen from the state in which he was at first made. For whereas there were two most critical times appointed for the effecting our redemption; one for the Incarnation of our Redeemer, when "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," in order to it; and the other for his Baptism, when he was initiated as it were into it, and actually took this great work upon him; at both these times we find all the Persons of the most glorious Trinity particularly mentioned, as concerned in it.

As for the first, when the fulness of time was come, that the Son of God should be incarnate, God sent the angel Gabriel to acquaint the blessed Virgin that he should be conceived and born of her: and, among other things, saith unto her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God⁹." Upon the saying of which words, and the blessed Virgin's expressing her consent, by saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word;" this great work was done, the Son of God was conceived in her, the "Word was made flesh." Now here we see three divine Persons concurring in this wonderful work: the Son of God, the Holy Ghost, or Spirit of God, and the Highest, or the Father, whose Son the one, and whose Spirit or power the other, is. One was conceived: he was conceived by another, and that other was the power of a third Person. So that in this the first thing that was actually done in order to our redemption, and upon which the whole work depended, the whole three Persons in the

⁸ 1 John v. 7.

⁹ Luke i. 35.

most blessed Trinity were most graciously pleased to shew themselves; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for ever.

And so they did likewise most wonderfully at the baptism of our Redeemer, when he was solemnly inaugurated into the office he had undertaken for us, and accordingly began to set about it. For it is written, "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straight-way out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased¹." Here all the three Persons of the most Holy Trinity did evidently appear together. For here was a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son," which could be no other but the voice of the Father, who also declared himself to be so, by calling the other his Son: and then here was the Son of this Father, declared to be so by the Father himself: and here was also the Spirit of God, descending like a dove, and lighting upon the Son, and so anointing him to be both a priest, a prophet, and a king, who is, therefore, most properly called the Messiah, or Christ, the Anointed of God, and every way qualified to be our Mediator and Redeemer. Yea, it is wonderful to observe, the three infinitely glorious incomprehensible Persons were pleased upon this extraordinary occasion to manifest themselves severally to the very senses of men, to their eyes and ears: for the Father was heard speaking, the Son was seen in the nature of man coming out of the water, and the Holy Ghost was seen in the shape of a dove descending and lighting upon him. And, therefore, we may truly say with St. Augustine, that at this time, "*Apparuit manifestissima Trinitas; Pater in voce, Filius in homine, Spiritus Sanctus in columbâ*:" "The Trinity appeared most manifestly; the Father in a voice, the Son in a man, the Holy Ghost in a dove²:" and with St. Jerome, "*Mysterium Trini-*

¹ Matt. iii. 16, 17.

² Aug. in Evang. Joh. tract. 6.

tatis in baptisinate demonstratur; Dominus baptizatur; Spiritus descendit in specie columbæ; Patris vox, testimonium Filio perhibentis, auditur;" "The mystery of the Trinity is demonstrated in the baptism of Christ; the Lord is baptized; the Spirit descendeth in the likeness of a dove; the voice of the Father, giving testimony to the Son, is heard³." And hence it is that this chapter is appointed as a proper lesson at morning upon Trinity Sunday, because the great mystery, which we this day celebrate, is so plainly and fully revealed in it.

And it is much to be observed, that as all the three divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, thus manifested themselves at the baptism of our Saviour, so he himself requires that all who would be his disciples should be made so by being baptized in the name of all the same Persons, saying to his apostles, "Go ye therefore and teach, or make all nations my disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost⁴." So that the same divine Persons, which so manifestly appeared at the baptism of Christ, are all to be particularly named at the baptism of every Christian, by Christ's own institution. And no man can be initiated into the Church of Christ, and so made a Christian any other way, but by being so baptized; this being the only way appointed by Christ himself for that purpose: who thereby hath sufficiently declared that he will own none for his disciples but such as are baptized in the name of all the same Persons, which appeared in so miraculous a manner when he himself was baptized; and also that our salvation depends upon, and must be attributed unto, all of them. For seeing he himself hath so ordered it, that none can be brought into a state of salvation but by being first baptized in the name of all three, all three must needs be acknowledged to concur in the effecting of it.

And verily that they do so, appears most evidently

³ Hierom. in Matt. iii.

⁴ Matt. xxviii. 19.

also from the words of my text. For as all these divine Persons manifested themselves in the creation of the world in general, and at the making of man in particular; as they appeared at the incarnation and baptism of our Redeemer; and as our Redeemer himself requires that all who would partake of that redemption which he hath purchased, should be baptized in the name of all three; so the apostle here, by his direction, writing to such as were so baptized at Corinth, and concluding his epistle to them with an hearty prayer, that they might have all things necessary to their salvation, refers all such things to three heads, and attributes them severally to the three Persons in the most Holy Trinity; and accordingly prays to each of them, saying, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." So that, did we but understand these words aright, we should thereby know how to exercise our faith in all and each of these divine Persons for what is necessary to our obtaining eternal salvation, according to their several ways of concurring to it.

But for that purpose, before we enter upon the explication of the several parts of the text, it will be necessary to observe some things in general about it. As first, although here be three several Persons named, and several properties are severally attributed to them, yet they are not several, but all one and the same individual God. This we are fully assured of by all those reasons, and by all such places of the Holy Scriptures, which demonstrate the unity of the Godhead: as where it is said, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God," ("our Elohim," in the plural number) "is one Lord, one Jehovah⁵." This the Son asserts of the Father and himself, "I and the Father are one⁶," not *εἷς*, but *ἐν ἑσμεν*, one Jehovah, one Being: and St. John of all three, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one⁷," where the same word is used again, *ἐν εἰσι*,

⁵ Deut. vi. 4.⁶ John x. 30.⁷ 1 John v. 7.

unum sunt, they are three in the plural number, but they are one in the singular; one Being, יהוה אחד, "one Jehovah," one God.

Hence, in the next place, whatsoever perfections or properties (except such as are purely personal) are attributed to any of these divine Persons, are the same in all, and may equally be attributed to every one; they being all and every one the same God, in whom all perfections centre, or, rather, who is all perfection itself. And, therefore, when we read of the grace of one, the love of another, and the fellowship of the third divine Person, it is not to be so understood, as if these properties were so peculiar to those Persons to which they are here attributed, that they do not belong also to the other; for they are the same in all, and may be equally attributed to one as well as another: and so they are in the Holy Scriptures. Here grace is ascribed to the Son, and love to the Father; in other places love is ascribed to the Son, and grace unto the Father: as where St. Paul saith, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ⁸?" "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge ⁹." And St. John, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, (the Son,) because he laid down his life for us ¹." Here love is plainly attributed to the Son: and so is grace to the Father, where St. Paul saith, "By the grace of God I am what I am ²." And, "Not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world ³." And as we here read of the communion, or fellowship of the Holy Ghost, we elsewhere read of the fellowship of the Son: "God is faithful," saith the apostle, "by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord ⁴." And St. John saith, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ ⁵." Which I therefore observe, lest any should think that we detract any thing from one Person, by attributing it to another: for whatsoever divine pro-

⁸ Rom. viii. 35.

⁹ Eph. iii. 19.

¹ 1 John iii. 16.

² 1 Cor. xv. 10.

³ 2 Cor. i. 12.

⁴ 1 Cor. i. 9.

⁵ 1 John i. 3.

perties are attributed to any one, are hereby attributed unto all; they being all one and the same God, in whom all properties also are one and the same property; and therefore cannot be divided, nor belong to one more than to another, as they are in him.

But then we must observe withal, that, notwithstanding this, when the Almighty Being, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is pleased to operate upon things without him, and so to exert and manifest himself to us, there is something particular attributed to one of these divine Persons more than to another. As it is plain that it was not the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, but the Son, which took the nature of man upon him: it was not the Father, nor the Son, but the Holy Ghost, which at the creation of the world moved upon the face of the waters; which at the incarnation of Christ overshadowed the blessed Virgin; and which upon the day of Pentecost came down upon the apostles. Thus all along in the Holy Scriptures the Father is said, in a peculiar manner, to be our Maker, the Son our Saviour, and the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier. And, accordingly, in my text, where the three Persons are all mentioned together with respect to us, the apostle prays for something particular from each of them: for the *love* of the Father, as he is the Maker and Governor of the world; for the *grace* of the Son, as he is the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind; and for the *communion* of the Holy Ghost, as he is the Sanctifier and Comforter of all the elect people of God: which will serve us as a key to open the whole mystery contained in these words, as we shall see presently.

But here is still another thing to be observed in general; which is, that the Son is here placed before the Father, whereas reason may seem to require that the Father should be placed first, as he is by the Son himself, commanding baptism to be administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: and by his beloved disciple, saying, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy

Ghost⁶." According to which order, the apostle should have said, "The love of God the Father, and the grace of Jesus Christ;" whereas, he contrariwise puts the Son first, saying, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God:" which being done by the special direction of the Holy Ghost, there was certainly great reason for it. Which that we may rightly understand, we must take notice, that, in the places before quoted, the divine Persons are named in their essential order, that which they have in and among themselves, or with respect to one another: according to which, the Father is placed first, because he begot the Son; the Son is placed second, because he was begotten of the Father; and the Holy Ghost last, because he proceeds from both. But the apostle in my text speaks not of the order of the divine Persons among themselves, but of that which they observe with respect to us and our salvation. He here wisheth to the Corinthians all things necessary to their salvation by Christ; and therefore it was necessary that he should begin first with Christ their Saviour, without whom they could never have had either the love of God, or the communion of the Holy Ghost. It is true, the love of God the Father was the first cause or motive of our salvation, as our Saviour himself hath taught us, saying, "That God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life⁷." But then we must observe, that our Saviour speaks here of God's love to mankind in general, saying, "God so loved the world:" he doth not speak of his love to particular men; it was out of his infinite love to fallen man, in general, that "he sent his Son into the world;" but his love to any particular man is only in, and for the sake of, his said Son, and no otherwise. For by nature we are all enemies to God; and therefore he is so to us: and there is no way for us to be reconciled to him, or to have him reconciled to us, but by his Son. For, as the apostle saith, "When we were enemies, we were recon-

⁶ Matt. xxviii. 19. 1 John v. 7.

⁷ John iii. 16.

ciled to God by the death of his Son⁸." And if it be by his Son only that we are reconciled to God, it must needs be only by his Son that we can have his love and favour: which he, therefore, never shews to any man, but only upon the account of "him in whom he is well pleased." But, as the apostle saith, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord⁹." Whereby we are given to understand, that the love which God the Father hath for any of us is only in his Son, and for his sake, without whom we could expect nothing but wrath and vengeance from him; and, by consequence, that the *grace* of Christ is most properly here placed before the *love* of God, seeing we cannot have this, unless we have that first. The same may be said also of the *communion* of the Holy Ghost: for that likewise is "shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Lord," as the same apostle teacheth us¹. Wherefore, seeing that we can never have either the love of God the Father, or the communion of God the Holy Ghost, but only by the grace of God the Son; there was all the reason in the world that the apostle should pray for this first, and say first, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," then "the love of God," and lastly, "the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

These things being thus premised in general, we shall easily discover the meaning of the several parts of the text. The first thing which the apostle here wisheth to the Corinthians, is, "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ;" which is a phrase he delights in very much. The common salutation that he useth at the beginning of every one of his thirteen epistles, to those he wrote to, runs thus; "Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." And at the end of his epistles he sometimes saith in short, "Grace be with you²." But most usually he concludes with, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with

⁸ Rom. v. 10.⁹ Rom. viii. 39.¹ Tit. iii. 5.² Col. iv. 18. Tit. iii. 15. 1 Tim. vi. 21. 2 Tim. iv. 22.

you³.” And so St. John concludes the Book of Revelation, and the whole New Testament⁴. From whence we may infer, that grace is to be had only by Christ; that his grace is the greatest blessing that can be desired; and that where the grace of Christ is, there is also the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, which are, therefore, particularly mentioned in my text, that we may know from whence they come, and that they are to be understood, wheresoever the grace of Christ is mentioned.

But then the question is, what is meant by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ? And how it comes to be so often appropriated unto him? For which it will be necessary to consider that remarkable passage in the Gospel of St. John, where he, having asserted the eternal and divine nature of the “Word” or “Son of God,” saith, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.—And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ⁵.” Here we see, first, that the Word, or Son of God, was made flesh, that is, he took upon him the nature of man in general, so as to become Emmanuel, God with us, God and man in one Person; and as such, he is here said to be “full of grace and truth:” where by *grace* I do not question but we are to understand, that which in the Old Testament is called חסד “mercy;” these two חסד ואמת “mercy and truth,” being very frequently put together, “mercy” always before “truth:” as where it is said, “All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth⁶.” “Mercy and truth are met together⁷.” “By mercy and truth sin is purged⁸.” “Mercy and truth preserve the king⁹.” Thus they are joined together: Gen. xxxii. 10. 2 Sam. ii. 6; xv. 20. Ps. xxxvi. 5; xl. 11; lvii.

³ Rom. vi. 24. 1 Cor. xvi. 23. Gal. vi. 18. Phil. iv. 23.
1 Thess. v. 28. 2 Thess. iii. 18. Philem. 25.

⁴ Rev. xxii. 21.

⁵ John i. 14. 16, 17.

⁶ Ps. xxv. 10.

⁷ Ps. lxxxv. 10.

⁸ Prov. xvi. 6.

⁹ Prov. xx. 28.

3. 10; lxi. 7; lxxxix. 1, 2. 14; xcvi. 3; c. 5; cxv. 1; cxxxviii. 2; cxvii. 2. Prov. iii. 3; xiv. 22. Thus God proclaimeth himself to be “abundant in goodness and truth¹,” where the word which we translate “goodness,” is the same which in the places before quoted is rendered “mercy,” and so it is rightly translated in that parallel place; “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth².” And accordingly God the Son, as incarnate, is here said to be full of grace, or mercy, and truth. “And of his fulness,” saith St. John, “all we have received.” We have none but what we receive from him; and how much soever we receive, he is still full: as the sun is still full of light, notwithstanding that we continually receive and enjoy it. Neither do we only receive of his fulness in general, but we receive grace for grace, that is, all manner of grace, according to that fulness which is in him. In him is the fulness and perfection of all grace and mercy: and for that it is in him our head, we of him receive whatsoever grace or mercy we have occasion for.

And the reason is, because, as it here follows, “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” The law, as given by Moses, threatened death and damnation, even all manner of judgment without mercy, to all that continued not in all things written in it. Which no man having done, all are by the law condemned to die, and suffer all the punishments which are there threatened, without any hopes of mercy; there being none there promised. But as the law was thus given by Moses, grace, or mercy, and truth came, ἐγένετο, “was made” by Jesus Christ, as the author and procurer of it. The law hath concluded all under sin, and therefore hath passed the sentence of condemnation upon all. And if the sentence be ever revoked or remitted, or if it be not actually executed, it must be acknowledged to be a great mercy. But

¹ Exod. xxxiv. 6.

² Ps. lxxxvi. 15.

there is no such mercy promised in the law given by Moses: there is not a word of that there, nor any where else, but only in the Gospel of Christ; who having in our nature undergone the punishments to which we are condemned by the law, he hath thereby made way for mercy to be shewn us, by God's accepting of his death instead of ours, and so acquitting or discharging us from it: yea, he hath thereby merited or purchased mercy for us, all manner of mercy, in that his death was of infinitely more value than all ours could ever have been. For that God is never merciful to any, but only for the sake of his Son, and upon the account of his death, is plain from his never shewing any mercy, but only to those for whom Christ died. The fallen angels stand in as much need of mercy as fallen man, but they never had, nor ever will have, any; because Christ did not die for them. But he having taken our nature upon him, and in it suffered the punishments which by the law were due to us, God is graciously pleased for his sake to promise grace or mercy to us; and whatsoever grace or mercy we receive from him, it comes to us only by Jesus Christ: as the Holy Ghost here assures us, saying, "That grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." It was in him that grace was at first promised to us, and it is in him that such promises are verified or fulfilled. "For," as the apostle saith, "all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him, Amen³;" that is, in him they were all made, and in him they are all confirmed and performed to us. And therefore "truth" is not here opposed, as it is commonly thought, only to the types and figures of the law, but it signifies more especially the truth and certainty of the promises which God hath made to mankind of grace and mercy in his Son. And that is the reason that "mercy," as I observed before, is not only here, but all along in the Holy Scriptures, put before "truth:" because "mercy" is first promised, and then truly granted according to that promise, and both by

³ 2 Cor. i. 20.

Christ. It was by him that grace was at first promised to us, and it is by him that the "truth" of such promises is assured to us, and so both "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ⁴."

From hence we may gather what is here meant by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, in my text. It is the grace, "the free undeserved favour and mercy;" it is the grace of the Lord, the Almighty God, the eternal and only-begotten Son, of the same substance and glory with the Father; it is the grace of the Lord Jesus, the most high God made man, and so become Jesus, a Saviour, to save his people from their sins; it is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, of God our Saviour, anointed to be to us a prophet, a priest, and king, and so fully qualified, and able, to do all things necessary for our salvation. And therefore all such things are here signified by "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," all things that are required, all things that can any way conduce to our eternal salvation; they are all contained in, and they all proceed from, his grace and mercy to us, without whom we can neither have, nor do, any thing at all towards it. But by him there is nothing but we may have, nothing but we can do that he would have us, in order to our being saved. By him we are called out of darkness "into his marvellous light⁵." By him we have grace to repent, and turn every one from his own iniquities, so that "sin shall not have dominion over us, seeing we are not under the law, but under grace⁶." "By him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace⁷." By him we are justified freely through his grace, "and accounted righteous before God himself⁸." "By him being justified by faith, we have peace with God," and are as perfectly reconciled unto him, as if he had never been angry or displeased with us⁹.

⁴ Vid. Ps. lxxxix. 33, 34. 49.

⁵ Rom. i. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 9.

⁶ Acts v. 31; iii. 26. Rom. vi. 14.

⁷ Eph. i. 7. Col. i. 14. Eph. iv. 32.

⁸ Rom. iii. 24. Tit. iii. 7. 2 Cor. v. 21. ⁹ Rom. v. 1. 10.

By him we have “power to become the sons of God, and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with him who is heir of all things¹.” “By him we are washed from our sins in his own blood, and are made kings and priests unto God and his Father².” By him “we can overcome the world, and triumph over death itself³.” By him we can do, and by him we can suffer whatsoever God sees good to lay upon us: for “his grace is always sufficient for us, and his strength made perfect in our weakness; so that we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us⁴.” By him we have a place prepared for us in heaven, “that where he is, there we may be also, to behold his glory, and be glorified together with him⁵.” In short, by him we may have every thing that is any way necessary, either to the beginning, the carrying on, or the perfecting, our salvation; “For he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them⁶.” All these things we have by Christ, and receive them of that infinite grace and mercy that is in him. And therefore the apostle wishing to the Corinthians the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, he thereby wished them every thing relating to their eternal salvation, as coming wholly and solely from his grace and mercy.

The next thing that follows in my text, is, “the love of God.” And it may well follow upon “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” here, for it doth so every where. For he, the eternal Son of God, having, as I have shewn, reconciled us to his Father, wheresoever his grace is, the love of the Father follows in course, who, being always well pleased with all that partake of him, hath a special love for them. The love of a father to his children, who is not only most tenderly affected towards them, but takes particular care of them, provides all things necessary for them, corrects them when they

¹ John i. 12. Rom. viii. 17. Heb. i. 2.

² Rev. i. 5, 6.

³ 1 John v. 4, 5. 1 Cor. xv. 57.

⁴ 2 Cor. xii. 9. Phil. iv. 13.

⁵ John. xiv. 2, 3; xvii. 24. Rom. viii. 17.

⁶ Heb. vii. 25.

do amiss, encourages them when they do well, and settles a sufficient maintenance upon them, that they may live comfortably in the world, according to every one's estate and quality; such is the love of the great God to those who by the grace of Christ are made his children. He keeps them always under his own care and conduct; he gives them all things necessary, both for life and godliness; he chasteneth them, not for his own pleasure, but for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness; he plentifully rewards all the services they perform in this world; and in the next he settles a kingdom upon every one of them, the kingdom of heaven itself, where they ever live as happily as it is possible for creatures to live: and all because he loves them as his own children by adoption, and the grace of his only-begotten Son.

This, therefore, is here meant by "the love of God," the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our God, and our Father. It is the love of God, as he is the Maker, Preserver, and Governor of the whole world, and orders and disposeth of all things in it according to his own will and pleasure; and therefore as for his own glory, so likewise for the good of these, he loves and is well pleased with them. "For we know," saith the apostle, "that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose⁷." All that love God, God loves: and, seeing he loves them, he makes all things concur to their advantage. For which purpose, by his good Providence, he makes them of such a temper as will best suit with the circumstances he designs for them, or else orders the circumstances so as will best suit with the temper he made them of: he measures out such a proportion of the good things of this life to them, as he knows will be good for them, and no more. He allots them such a place to live in upon earth, where they may enjoy the means whereby to obtain grace and salvation by his Son. He keeps them from

⁷ Rom. viii. 28.

falling into any evil, and all evil from falling upon them. He defends them from all their enemies; or else turns their hearts, and makes them to become their friends. He infatuates the counsels, and defeats all the ill designs, that men or devils can form against them. He hears the prayers they put up unto him in his Son's name, and for his sake accepts of all the duties they perform to him. He is with them where-soever they are, to direct, assist, and prosper them in whatsoever they do. He sanctifieth and blesseth all manner of occurrences to them, so that every thing which happens is, all things considered, the best that could happen to them. There are many, I may truly say innumerable, such instances of the love which God the Father is pleased for his Son's sake to manifest to those who are regenerate, and so made his children in him, even by his ordinary Providence: and where that fails, he is pleased to do it in an extraordinary and miraculous manner, as we see in the children of Israel; for he, having a special love for them by reason of their near relation to his Son incarnate, brought them into and out of Egypt: he led them, he fed them, he clothed them, with miracles for forty years together; and all "because he loved them," as it is said, Deut. iv. 37; vii. 7, 8. And particularly when Balaam was hired to curse them, "God turned his curse into a blessing, because he loved them⁸."

Thus he, one way or other, always preserves those he loves from all things that may hurt them, and withholds nothing from them that will really do them good: but he carries them through all "the changes and chances of this mortal life," so as to bring them at last to heaven, where they clearly see his love in every thing that ever befel them, continually praise and adore him for it, and are eternally happy in the perfect enjoyment of it. From all which it appears, how great a blessing it is to have the love of God the Father, the Almighty Creator and Governor of all things; how ne-

⁸ Deut. xxiii. 5.

cessarily it follows upon the grace of his only-begotten Son; and, by consequence, with how great reason, as well as charity to the Corinthians, the apostle here, next to "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," prays they might have "the love of God."

And that their happiness might be complete, he adds also, "the communion of the Holy Ghost," the Third Person in the most Blessed Trinity; called the Ghost, or Spirit, both of the Father and the Son, because he proceeds from both; and Holy in a peculiar manner, because all the holiness that is in the creatures proceeds from him. And to have communion or fellowship with him, is to partake of his holiness, and of all the glorious effects of the grace of Christ, and the love of God in him: for as he proceedeth both from the Father and the Son, both the Father and the Son act by him; and therefore he is called "the finger of God⁹." The Father acteth by him in the government of the world, and all the parts of it: the Son in the government of the church, and all particular members in it: and whatsoever blessings we receive from the Father through the merits and mediation of the Son, they are all conveyed to us by the Holy Ghost, which for that purpose "abides with us for ever¹." It is he, as proceeding from and sent by our Saviour to do it, "that enlightens our minds, and teacheth us all things necessary to our everlasting peace²." It is he that keepeth us from error, heresy, and schism, and guides us into all truth, both in faith and manners³. It is he that sanctifies, renews, and regenerates us, and so makes us new creatures, and the children of the most high God⁴. It is he that beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God⁵. It is he that mortifies the deeds of the body, that quickens our souls, and "worketh in us, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure⁶." It is he that endues men with spiritual

⁹ Luke xi. 20.

¹ John xiv. 16.

² Eph. i. 17. Isa. xi. 2. John xiv. 26.

³ John xvi. 13.

⁴ 2 Thess. ii. 13. John iii. 5, 6. 8. Tit. iii. 5.

⁵ Rom. viii. 16.

⁶ Rom. viii. 13. John vi. 63. Phil. ii. 13.

gifts, suitable to the work which God requires of them: to one he gives the "word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another the gift of healing, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues⁷." It is he that produceth in us "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;" which are therefore said to be "the fruit of the Spirit⁸." And so is all manner of goodness and virtue, wheresoever it is found among men; it all springs from the good Spirit of God as from its root, and from thence also receives all its nourishment, increase, and strength⁹. It is he also that is our only Comforter, who supports and cheers our spirits, by manifesting God's love and favour to us, lifting up the light of his countenance upon us, keeping our hearts fixed upon our promised inheritance, filling us with firm hopes and constant expectations of it, and so giving us peace, and joy, and satisfaction of mind, in whatsoever happens here below¹. In short, whatsoever direction, assistance, or power, we have, or can have, of thinking, or desiring, or speaking, or doing any thing that is truly good, it is communicated to us by the Spirit of God our Saviour, and therefore is all comprehended under this one great blessing which the apostle here wisheth for in the last place, even "the communion of the Holy Ghost."

The several parts of the text being thus explained, we may easily observe the meaning of the whole to be this;—that the apostle here prays that the Corinthians might have, first, the grace of God the Son; that is, all the mercy which he, as the Redeemer of mankind, had purchased for them with his blood. Secondly, that they might have the love of God the Father; that is, all the favours which he, as the supreme Governor of the world, could shew them. And thirdly, that they

⁷ 1 Cor. xii. 8—10.

⁸ Gal. v. 22, 23.

⁹ Eph. iii. 16.

¹ John xvi. 7. Acts ix. 31. Rom. xiv. 17, &c.

might have the communion of the Holy Ghost; that is, all the gifts, graces, and comforts, which he could communicate unto them both from the Father and the Son: or, in short, that they might have all things, that God the Son, or God the Father, or God the Holy Ghost, could do for them, according to their several ways of working in the world; that is, all things that could any way contribute to make them completely happy. All which David also, or the Church by him, prays for in the same method and order, saying, “God,” אלהים “be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us².”

Now from hence we may learn how necessary it is to believe in the most blessed Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three Persons, one God; seeing they all are pleased to concern themselves so much about us, and our happiness depends upon them all. Hence we may learn to confide and trust in all and every one of these divine Persons for all things relating to our happiness and salvation. Hence we may learn what infinite cause we have to praise and adore God for his infinite goodness to us poor mortals upon earth, and to sing with the choir of heaven, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory³.”

Hence we may learn how much we are obliged to serve, and love, and please God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, who is thus infinitely gracious, and loving, and bountiful unto us. Hence we may learn what great reason our Church hath to appoint, that at the end of every Psalm, as well as upon other occasions, we should say, or sing, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.” Hence, lastly, we may learn, wherefore our Church concludes her daily prayers, as the apostle doth this epistle, with the words of my text,—even because they contain in short all that we can pray for, and are in effect the same, the form which God himself prescribed,

² Ps. lxxvii. 1.

³ Isa. vi. 3.

wherewith the priests should bless the people. "On this wise," saith he, "ye shall bless the children of Israel; The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace⁴." Where Jehovah, the Lord, is thrice repeated, and in the original hath in each place a several accent, to denote, as the Jews themselves acknowledge, some great mystery; which can be no other but the most blessed Trinity, all the three Persons whereof are here called, every one, the Lord, Jehovah. The Father is placed first; but the blessings bestowed severally by each Person are the same which are ascribed to them in my text. And when the priest pronounced this blessing to the people (as we still do in the visitation of the sick), God promised that he himself would accordingly bless them. And if you faithfully and devoutly receive it as you ought, I do not question but he will do so now, upon my pronouncing in his name the same blessing, according to this apostolical form in my text, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

⁴ Numb. vi. 24—26.

SERMON V.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST PREFERABLE TO
ALL OTHER.

1 Cor. ii. 2.

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

It having pleased our great Creator to endue us with such principles of reason and understanding, whereby we are capable of knowing himself, his will, his works, and all things necessary to our serving and enjoying him, and likewise to fill us at first with such knowledge, as much as we could hold; although by the fall of our first parents our brains are shattered, and all our faculties so disordered and out of tune, that now we actually know but very little, if any thing at all, as we ought; yet, our capacities still remaining, we cannot but long to have them filled again. And hence it is, that all men naturally desire knowledge; and how much soever a man knows, he still desires to know more. And seeing no one man can possibly attain the knowledge of all things that are to be known, men seem to offer at making up that defect, by undertaking them severally; some to find out one thing, and some another, according to their several tempers, inclinations, and circumstances; and then to communicate their inventions, for the increase of each other's knowledge. As

some are only for observing the phenomena, or outward appearance; others are for prying into the secrets of nature, and the first principles by which every thing in its place acteth under God: some are for taking the dimensions of the earth, and particular places in it; others are for calculating the motions of the heavens, and those immense bodies that move or seem to move there. This man keeps close to his plain mathematical demonstrations; another soars aloft among high metaphysical notions and subtle speculations. One man is for searching into the mysteries of several arts, that have been invented and practised in the world; a second is for understanding the languages that are spoken in several nations; a third is for learning how to put words and sentences so neatly or so cunningly together, as to make them the more pleasing to the ears, or more forcible upon the minds, of those who hear them. Thus I might instance in every thing that mankind is capable of knowing; for, whatsoever it is, some or other are always employing their thoughts about it. And if a man finds out any thing which he did not know before, or if he doth but think he doth so, it is a mighty pleasure and satisfaction to his mind, because it tends towards the filling up that vacuum which was there, by reason of his not knowing so much as he was capable of.

But there is one sort of knowledge which few people endeavour after, although it would do them more good, and therefore ought to be preferred before all the languages, arts, and sciences in the world besides, howsoever useful they may be in their respective places. What that is, I shall not undertake to determine, but leave that to one, whom we cannot but acknowledge to have known more than any one, or all of us here present put together; to one who had learned so much, that Festus thought "much learning had made him mad¹." I mean St. Paul, who, by the inspiration and command of God himself, here tells the Corinthians, that he "determined not to know any thing among them, save

¹ Acts xxvi. 24.

Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” Whereby he hath certified all men that, in his divinely-inspired judgment, this kind of knowledge so far exceeds all other, that none else deserves to be named with it.

The occasion of the words was this: St. Paul having been some time before at Corinth, and there planted the Gospel among the inhabitants of that city, in the verse before my text he tells them what arts he had used, or rather what he had not used, in the doing it. “And I,” saith he, “brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.” He had used neither rhetoric nor logic, neither elegance of speech nor subtlety of argument, to persuade them to embrace the faith of Christ, but had only in plain terms declared to them the testimony which God had given of him. And having told them this, he acquaints them in my text with the reason why he took this course; “For,” saith he, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” This is the reason why he dealt so plainly with them, because he did not think it necessary, or intend, either to know himself, or to make known any thing else to them. The words may be understood both ways; but they both meet at last in this,—that the knowledge of “Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” is of itself sufficient to direct a man in the way to eternal life, and, therefore, is preferable to all other knowledge; there being no other knowledge whatsoever that can do it without this; but this will do it without any other: not that the knowledge of other things is altogether useless; but that this only is necessary both for ministers to teach, and Christians, as such, to learn; as comprising under it all things that can any way conduce to their being holy here, and happy for ever.

Wherefore ye have no cause to complain when we preach this plain doctrine to you; it is our duty to do it, and it is for your interest that we should: we have here the example of the great apostle for it, and may truly say with him, “Necessity is laid upon us; yea, woe

is unto us, if we preach not the Gospel²,” if we preach not Jesus Christ, the end of the law, and the sum and substance of the Gospel: if we do not this, we act not according to the commission that he hath given us, nor do the work he sent us about, and so lose our labour; and, after all our preaching unto others, shall be cast away ourselves. And I am sure you will have no cause to thank us for any other doctrine than this, or what tends some way or other towards it; for whatsoever it be, though it be ever so finely dressed up, and set off to please your ears and fancies, it can never convert or save your souls; and so you will be neither the wiser nor better for it; for you have but one Saviour in the world, and that is Jesus Christ; if he do not save you, no body else can. Aristotle can never save you with all his philosophy, nor Tully with all his rhetoric, nor Plato neither with his fine notions borrowed from Moses; no, nor Moses himself: he must conduct you in the right way through the wilderness; but it is Joshua, or, as the Greeks call him, Jesus, only that can bring you into the land of Canaan; the law must direct our steps, but it is the Gospel only can save our souls: the Gospel, as it reveals Jesus Christ our only Saviour and Redeemer to us; and therefore reveals him to us, that we may know him: and by consequence, as ye cannot wonder that St. Paul did it, so ye cannot blame us, if we, after him, determine “not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

But that I may set this in as clear a light as I can before you, I shall shew,

First, What we ought to know concerning him;

Secondly, That this so far exceeds all other knowledge, that we may reasonably determine, with the apostle, not to know any thing else.

To find out the first, we need not go from my text, where whatsoever is necessary to be known concerning our Saviour is reduced to two heads,—what he is, and what he hath suffered; or, as the apostle expresseth it,

“Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” Jesus Christ, ye know, are the two names whereby he is usually called, sometimes by the one, sometimes by the other, and very often by both together. Of which the first, Jesus, is his proper name, signifying his person; the other, Christ, signifies his offices: and so both together contain under them all that we ought to know, either concerning what he is in himself, or what he hath done for us; as we shall clearly see when we have taken a full view of each of them, and what is imported by them.

As for the first, Jesus, which in Hebrew signifies “a Saviour,” that is, a name that was given to some in the Old Testament, as to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the sons of Josedech, Syrach, &c., but it was given them only by their parents upon earth. Although there was, doubtless, an overruling hand of Providence in the son of Nun’s being called Joshua; or, as the Greeks always write and pronounce it, Ἰησοῦς, Jesus: in that he, succeeding Moses, and bringing the children of Israel into the typical land of Canaan, which Moses could not do, he was a type of the true Jesus, who brings the people of God to heaven, the true land of promise, which the law, given by Moses, could never have done.

But this name was given to Christ by his heavenly Father, the most high God himself, who sent a special messenger, one of the highest, if not the highest, of all the angels in heaven, Gabriel himself, to command that his name should be called Jesus; and that, too, not only once, but at two several times: first, at the annunciation, when he came to the blessed Virgin, to acquaint her that the Saviour of the world should be born of her: for, having first assured her of the great favour which God had for her, by saying, “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women;” she being troubled at his saying, and casting in her mind what manner of salutation this should be, “the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring

forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus³.” There can be no question made of it, but that the Virgin knew what that name signified, even a Saviour: but why he should be called by that name, the angel did not think good to tell her at present in plain terms; but he told her that, from which she might easily perceive how fit and able he would be to answer that name, or to be a Saviour. For when she had said unto the angel, “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? The angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God⁴.” For he calls that which should be born of her, not an holy God, or an holy man, but an holy thing, τὸ ἅγιον, in the neuter gender, to signify that he should be neither the one nor the other singly by itself, but both God and man together, a certain compositum made up of two natures, the divine and human in one Person. Which wonderful union being effected by the immediate power of God; “Therefore,” saith he, “this holy thing shall be called the Son of God:” as the first Adam also was, because he likewise was formed immediately by God himself⁵. For that I look upon as the proper meaning of his being called “the Son of God” in this place; the angel here giving that as the reason why he should be so called. After this, the angel having acquainted her, that her cousin Elisabeth “had conceived a son in her old age,” and put her in mind that “with God nothing shall be impossible;” Mary said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word⁶.” Whereby she having signified her submission to the divine will, and her full consent that it should be as the angel had said, the Holy Ghost immediately came upon her, and the “power of the Highest overshadowed her;” so that the Son of God was at that moment conceived

³ Luke i. 30, 31.

⁵ Luke iii. 38.

⁴ Ver. 34, 35.

⁶ Luke i. 38.

in her (as the fathers generally agree), and therefore the business he came about being now done, it follows, "and the angel departed from her."

Some time after this an angel, and doubtless the same, appeared also unto Joseph, to whom the blessed Virgin was espoused, and said, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife : for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins⁷." Where we see that, after he was conceived, the angel required Joseph also, as his reputed father, to give him this name, and acquaints him with the reason why he should be so called, even because "he should save his people from their sins:" whereby he likewise plainly gave him to understand, not only that he who should be born of the Virgin, was to be born as a man, but also that he was the true God Jehovah, of whom the royal prophet saith, that "he shall redeem Israel from all his sins⁸." For in that the angel here saith, that Jesus shall do that which the prophet saith Jehovah shall do ; it is plain, that this Jesus is Jehovah, the Lord God Almighty, who alone can "save his people from their sins:" as appears also from what follows.

For after the words before quoted, either the angel himself, as some, or the evangelist, as others, think, saith, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us⁹." Where Tertullian rightly observes, that the name Emmanuel is interpreted, "*Uti non solum sonum expectes, sed et sensum;*" "that thou shouldst not consider only the sound, but the sense or meaning of the name¹." The angel saith, "he shall be called Jesus;" the prophet

⁷ Matt. i. 20, 21.

⁹ Matt. i. 22, 23.

⁸ Ps. cxxx. 8.

¹ Tertul. adv. Jud. c. 9.

saith, "he shall be called Emmanuel." These two names do not sound alike, but they both mean the same thing: for "God's being with us," signifies his saving us; which he could not do, except he be with us. But here, by his name being called Emmanuel, according to the idiom of the Hebrew tongue, we may rather understand that he is Emmanuel, "God with us," and that too in the highest sense that can be, even so as to be God, with our nature united to his Divine Person. So that Emmanuel in Hebrew signifies the same as Θεάνθρωπος in Greek, God-man; or, as the angel expressed it before to the blessed Virgin, τὸ ἅγιον, "that holy thing," consisting of two distinct natures united in one and the same Person, as God is here said to be with us, in one and the same word, Emmanuel.

This is the true doctrine of the Church concerning the Person of Christ, as it was declared by the General Councils, and hath been all along believed and preached both before and since, as being revealed in God's holy word, as clearly and fully as any article of our Christian faith. And it was but necessary it should be so, most of the others being grounded upon this, as might easily be shewn, if it was to our present purpose. But I mention it here, only as it was intimated to our Lord's real mother, and reputed father, together with God's will that he should be called Jesus; which name was accordingly given him at his circumcision², and therefore is his proper name, pointing out his Person to us, as he is the Word made flesh, Emmanuel, God and man in one Person, and so exactly qualified to be what the name imports, our Saviour.

The other name whereby he is usually called, is Christ, which in Greek signifies anointed, or rather, the anointed, as Messiah doth in Hebrew. Under this name and notion he was expected long before he came into the world; as appears from the woman of Samaria saying, "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ³." And it is very observable, that as the angel

² Luke ii. 21.

³ John iv. 25.

Gabriel, by God's appointment, ordered his name to be called Jesus; so the same angel, above five hundred years before, called his name Messiah, or Christ. For it was he who said to Daniel, "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks. And after threescore and ten weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself¹."

But why Jesus was thus called Christ, Messiah, or the Anointed, we may learn from St. Peter, saying, "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power⁵." This was his anointing: he was anointed both with God and by himself, which none ever was but he. And whereas there are three sorts of offices which men have been anointed into, prophets, kings, and priests; none but he ever was anointed into them altogether. Melchisedec was a king and a priest, but he was no prophet; Samuel was a prophet and a priest, but he was no king; David was a king and a prophet, but he was no priest: but Jesus was both prophet, and king, and priest, and made so by God's own immediate unction, and therefore might well be called the Christ, or Anointed.

Wherefore as his name Jesus signifies his PERSON, so by his name Christ we understand the OFFICES which he undertook, that he might really be our Jesus, by saving us from our sins. And, therefore, to know Jesus as he is the Christ, it will be necessary to consider these three offices, which he undertook and executes for us.

First, he was anointed to be a prophet, to make known the divine will unto the world. This we have from himself, saying in and by the prophet Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek⁶," &c. For that these words are meant of him, he himself

⁴ Dan. ix. 25, 26. Luke ii. 11. ⁵ Acts x. 38. Matt. iii. 16.

⁶ Isa. lxi. 1.

declared, when, having read them in the synagogue at Nazareth, he said to those which heard them, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears⁷." From whence we may observe, that he is the great prophet of the world, all other true prophets speaking from and under him, and by his Spirit's moving and directing them what to say: for that it was his Spirit that spake in the prophets, we are also assured by the same Spirit speaking in his apostle, and saying, that the prophets "searched what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify⁸." It was Christ, therefore, who, by his Holy Spirit proceeding from him, revealed the will of God all along unto the world, before he himself came into it. And when he was here, he did it with his own mouth, acquainting them with every thing that was necessary for men to know: "All things," saith he, "that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you⁹." The same he did afterwards by his apostles, and still continueth to do it by such as succeed them in the ministry of his word, to this day, and so to his second coming: they all speak only in his name, and by his commission, he himself also being always with them in the doing of it; "Lo," saith he, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world¹."

Wherefore all the knowledge we have, or can have, either of God himself, or his holy will, we are beholden to Christ, as our great prophet, for it; who being likewise Jesus our Saviour, would be sure to conceal nothing from us that is necessary for us to know, in order to our being saved; nor reveal any thing to us, but what was necessary to the same end. And, therefore, as ever we hope or desire to be saved by him, we must be sure to believe what he hath taught, how much soever it may seem above our carnal reason: and we must do whatsoever he hath commanded us, how much

⁷ Luke iv. 21.

⁹ John xv. 15.

⁸ 1 Pet. i. 11.

¹ Matt. xxviii. 20.

soever it may seem contrary to our temporal interests; yea, we must believe what he hath said, therefore because he said it; and observe what he hath commanded, therefore because he hath commanded it: otherwise we do not believe or obey him at all. And if we do not hearken to him as our prophet, we can never expect he should be our Saviour. He himself hath told us, in effect, that he will not; first by his servant Moses, and then by his apostle St. Peter, saying, "That every soul that will not hear that prophet (meaning himself) shall be destroyed from among the people²."

And as he was anointed to be a prophet, so likewise to be a king. This the prophet Isaiah, by his direction, speaks of, saying, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace³," &c. This the angel Gabriel also acquainted Daniel with, calling him, Messiah, or Christ the prince⁴. And the same angel discovered the same thing likewise to the blessed Virgin; for having told her that she should bring forth a Son, he adds, that he, her said Son, "shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end⁵." Jesus therefore is a king: he is a great, a mighty, an almighty king: he is "King of kings, and Lord of lords⁶." He is the supreme, the universal Monarch of the world. He hath "all power given unto him both in heaven and earth⁷." He hath a name given him "which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the

² Deut. xviii. 15. 19. Acts iii. 23.

⁴ Dan. ix. 25. Luke ii. 11.

⁶ Rev. xvii. 14; xix. 16.

³ Isa. ix. 6, 7.

⁵ Luke i. 32, 33.

⁷ Matt. xxviii. 18.

glory of God the Father⁸." He is set at the right hand of God in "heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and is made the head over all things to the church⁹." To the church, to defend it, to enlarge it, to cleanse it, to govern it, to constitute officers in it, to prescribe laws to it, and to enable his people to obey them; for he is exalted with the right hand of God, "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins¹." As he is a Saviour, he forgives and saves his people from their sins; and for that purpose, as he is a Prince, he gives them repentance, "repentance not to be repented of." He gives them grace both to repent, and to do works meet for repentance: it is he that gives it, and he alone can do it; without him "we can do nothing," as he himself said². But, as his apostle observed, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me³." By him we can crucify the flesh, overcome the world, resist the devil, and make him fly from us: by him we can do, and by him we can suffer, whatsoever he sees good to lay upon us: by him we can "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world:" by him we can be made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;" and by him we can have it actually conferred upon us: for we can do all things required of us by the power of this almighty Prince, who is "over all, God blessed for ever⁴."

But, behold the infinite love of God to mankind! This glorious, this almighty King, for our sakes, was pleased to condescend so far as to become a priest too; for as he is a king, so he is a "priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec⁵." After the order of Mel-

⁸ Phil. ii. 9—11.

¹ Acts v. 31.

² Phil. iv. 13.

⁹ Eph. i. 20—22.

² John xv. 5.

³ Rom. ix. 5.

⁵ Heb. v. 6; vii. 17.

chisedec, not after Aaron's order; for they of the Aaronical order "were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man," this God-man, "because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood⁶." A priesthood which passeth not from one to another, as theirs did, from father to son, but is executed always by himself, in his own person. And besides, the Aaronical priests went only into the holy place made with hands, and there, with the blood of the sacrifice they had offered, made atonement for the sins of the people but once a year; whereas "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us⁷." So that now we have always an advocate in heaven, "Jesus Christ the righteous;" and he himself, as our great High Priest, is the "propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world⁸." And therefore "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them⁹."

But that we may rightly understand how he executes his office, and what sacrifice he offered wherewith to make atonement for the sins of the world, we must know not only "Jesus Christ," but "him crucified:" for how great, how holy, how excellent a person soever he be in himself, that is nothing to us, unless he was crucified, and unless he was crucified for us, too. And, therefore, the apostle did not think it enough to know, or to preach, Christ absolutely considered; "But," saith he, "we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God¹." That is, Christ, as crucified, is the power of God, whereby he destroys the works of the devil; and the wisdom of

⁶ Heb. vii. 23, 24.

⁷ Heb. ix. 24.

⁸ 1 John ii. 1, 2.

⁹ Heb. vii. 25.

¹ 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

God, whereby he makes us wise and good : and so discovers both the infinite power and wisdom of God, in that wonderful redemption which he hath wrought for us. Which he could never have done, if he had not been crucified : for God himself said, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them².” But no mere man ever did or will do all things which are there written ; and therefore every man is cursed by God himself : and unless this curse be taken off from us, it is impossible we should receive any blessing from him. Neither can it be taken off from us, but by another’s bearing it in our stead : for God cannot lie ; his word must be fulfilled, and the curse executed some where or other ; and unless there be one that hath borne it for every man, every man must bear it for himself. But, blessed be God, there is one, Jesus Christ our Lord, who “tasted death for every man³.” “He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” But how was he made a curse for us ? By being crucified. “For it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree⁴.” But Christ, when crucified, was hanged on a tree, and so bore the curse ; not for himself, that could not be, for he had continued in all things which the law required : and therefore it must be for us, in whose nature he bore it, and for every one that partaketh of that nature. For the nature in which he suffered it being the common nature of all men, the curse was executed upon all men ; though not in their particular persons, yet in their general nature, which every man is of ; and therefore may justly be looked upon as having undergone it, according as God said he should.

Especially considering the greatness of the Person that suffered it : not a mere man, not an angel, not an archangel, but the only-begotten Son of God, of the same essence and glory with the Father. This the

² Deut. xxvii. 26. Gal. iii. 10.

³ Heb. ii. 9.

⁴ Gal. iii. 13.

apostle takes special notice of in this very chapter; where, speaking of the Jews crucifying Christ, he saith, "they crucified the Lord of glory⁵;" which is the same as if he had said, "they crucified God himself:" and therefore the blood which was then shed upon the cross was the blood of God. So the same apostle, or rather the Spirit of God himself speaking in him, plainly calls it, where, speaking to the elders of the church, he saith, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood⁶." With his own blood! How can that be? Hath God any blood in him? No, he hath none in his own divine nature; but he had in that nature which he assumed, and united to his own divine Person, so as to make it his own nature; and, by consequence, the blood of it was his own blood, which otherwise it could not have been: whereas, that it was so, is evident beyond all contradiction, both from this, where it is expressly called so, and from many other places of God's own word; as likewise from what we shewed before concerning the Person of Jesus, even that he is Emmanuel, God and man in one Person: for from hence it necessarily follows, that although he suffered only as man, yet the Person that suffered was also God; and therefore his sufferings were properly the sufferings of God, his blood the blood of God, as he himself calls it. And hence it is, that his sufferings were of such infinite worth and merit for mankind, in whose nature he suffered, because the Person that suffered in that nature was of infinite power and glory: and so his sufferings were not only as much, but much more than mankind was ever bound or capable to undergo.

God hath pronounced the curse, under which all manner of punishment is implied, against all men that do not continue in all things which his law requireth;

⁵ 1 Cor. ii. 8.

⁶ Acts xx. 28.

and all men failing in something that is there required, are bound by God's word to undergo it: but they are bound to undergo it only in their own finite persons, whereas Christ hath undergone it for them in a Person that is infinite. Which being more than was threatened, and more than all mankind could ever have done in their own persons, he hath thereby not only taken off the curse that was laid upon us, but hath merited for us all sorts of mercies and blessings which our nature, in which he did it, is capable of: particularly the divine grace and assistance, whereby we may be enabled sincerely to obey his laws; God's acceptance of what we do, upon the account of what he hath done for us; and his rewarding it at last with no less than an eternal crown of glory.

By this, therefore, we may see what sacrifice Christ hath offered, and how he executeth the office of priesthood for us: for he having taken the whole nature of man upon him, and united it to his own divine Person, he was pleased to offer it up as a whole burnt-offering, by dying in it upon the altar of the cross for the sins, and in the stead, of all others that partake of that nature; which was therefore both the greatest and the most, I may say, the only true and proper sacrifice that was ever offered: those of the Levitical law being only types and figures of this; but this was such a sacrifice as did really expiate, or, as St. John speaks, "was a propitiation for the sins of the world⁷." By means whereof Christ is now a most effectual mediator between God and us; as the apostle shews, where, having said, "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;" he presently adds, "who gave himself a ransom for all;" or, as the Greek words, *ὁ δὸς ἑαυτὸν ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων*, plainly signify, "having given himself a ransom instead of all⁸." It is by this that he is completely qualified to mediate, or intercede, for all men; so that all, who will believe in

⁷ 1 John ii. 1, 2.

⁸ 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.

him for it, may be discharged from their sins, and fully restored to the love and favour of God again, so as to be justified before him, accepted of him, cleansed and sanctified by him, and at last be made eternally happy in the enjoyment of his divine perfections. And whosoever, of all Adam's posterity, are so, must ascribe it wholly and solely to "Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

These things deserve to be more fully considered by us all, who are so infinitely concerned in them: but what I have thus briefly touched upon will give us sufficient light into that which I promised to shew in the next place,—even that this so far exceeds all other knowledge, that the apostle might well say, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." For, in the first place, from hence we may easily see, that this is the most noble, the most sublime, the most excellent knowledge that we can ever attain: the apostle calls it, τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως, "the excellency, the super-excellency of knowledge," in comparison whereof all things else seemed as nothing in his sight. "Yea, doubtless," saith he, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord⁹." And well might he say so; for what knowledge can be comparable to that of "knowing Jesus Christ, and him crucified?" The knowledge of all things else is mean and low, perplexed, and entangled among the creatures that God hath made: this soars aloft among his divine perfections, and the highest mysteries that the most refined understanding can ever reach; for to know Jesus, is to know God himself; him by whom all things were made, and "without whom there was not any thing made that was made:" him who, before all worlds, was begotten of the Father, so as to be of one and the same nature with him: him who, in the fulness of time, was born of a Virgin, so as to be of one and the same nature with us also: him, that is both perfect God and perfect man, and perfectly both God and man in one and the

⁹ Phil. iii. 8.

same Person. To know Jesus Christ is to know the great Prophet of the world, who teacheth man knowledge; the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who ruleth and reigneth over the whole creation, over bodies and spirits too; the real High Priest, with his Urim and Thummim, true "lights and perfections" shining continually about him. To "know Jesus Christ, and him crucified," is to know how the Lamb of God "taketh away the sin of the world;" how all the losses that we suffered in the first Adam are repaired and made up by the second; how God himself is made of God himself to us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" how the Holy Spirit of God comes to be sent down upon us, to enlighten, direct, and quicken us; how there comes to be such a mediator between God and men, who is able to bring two parties, that are at such an infinite distance, together, and reconcile them to one another; how the Church was purchased and built upon a rock, that "the gates of hell might not prevail against it;" how the Almighty Creator of the world comes to be so infinitely merciful and propitious to fallen men, and not at all to the fallen angels, although they be both alike his own creatures. But what do I mean to offer at shewing the excellency of that knowledge, which no tongue is able to express? these are contemplations fit for angels! "The angels themselves desire to look into them;" and the more they look, the more they admire and wonder. And, therefore, we may well conclude, that no knowledge that we poor mortals upon earth can have is worthy to be named with this, of "knowing Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

And yet it is strange to observe, although this knowledge be so high and wonderful, it is, notwithstanding, the most clear and certain of any thing we can ever know; in comparison of which, the knowledge of all other things is generally no more than guess and conjecture: for we are taught this not of men, or by men, but of God, and by God himself, who by his own infallible Spirit, in his own word, hath revealed to us

all things necessary to be known concerning "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Whereby it comes to pass, that I do not only think, imagine, or suppose, but I am fully assured of the truth of every thing that is there written concerning him, more than I am of any thing I see, or hear, or understand by discourse and ratiocination: for my senses may deceive me, and so may my reason and understanding;—they have often done it: but God can neither be deceived, nor deceive. And, therefore, what he saith, although the thing itself be ever so much above my comprehension, I know, I am sure, it is true: it cannot but be so. And, therefore, all the knowledge that we have of Christ being grounded wholly upon God's own word, it must needs be as certain as it is possible to be; as certain as God himself can make it.

And it is very well for us it is so, considering the great use and need we have always of it. I do not deny but that the knowledge of other things is in many cases very useful: some to private persons, some to public societies, some to whole nations, some to mankind in general, some to the right understanding the Scriptures, and so to the knowledge of Christ himself; yea, there is scarce any kind of knowledge, but some way or other helps towards the raising, the refining, and the enlarging, our understandings, and so to the making us more capable of knowing him. But whatsoever it be at present, unless it tends to that end, at last it will stand us in no stead; for what if I was skilled in all the arts and sciences that ever were invented, and could manage them to the best advantage; what if I had the whole system of logic in my head, and could argue with all the art and cunning that ever man had; what if I could dive into the depth of natural philosophy, and see the several springs and movements of all secondary causes; what if I had turned over all the records of the Church, and the histories of all places and ages since the world began, and could reduce every thing that ever happened to its proper time; what if I could

count the number of the stars, call them all by their names, and describe their motions to a hair's breadth; what if I understood all languages, and could discourse with people of all nations upon earth in their own mother tongue; what then? Notwithstanding all this, without the knowledge of Jesus Christ I should be lost and undone for ever. For "there is no name under heaven whereby we can be saved but the name of Christ:" neither is there any way possible to be saved by him, unless we know him. For unless we know him, we can do nothing that is required in order to our being saved by him.

In order to our being saved, there are two things required,—repentance and faith. As for the first, although many excellent arguments may be drawn from the majesty of God's person, from the severity of his justice, from the glory of his goodness, from the righteousness of his law, from the beauty of holiness, from the odiousness of sin, from the dreadful consequences of it, and from many other topics, which one would think sufficient to persuade any man to repent and turn to God, yet nothing can do it effectually without the knowledge of Jesus Christ. For, after all, it is he that gives repentance; and he never gives it to any but to those who know him: none else being capable of receiving it from him; but they who know him are in the ready way to have it.

For "to know Jesus Christ, and him crucified," is in itself the most powerful argument to work in us true repentance. To know Jesus, the eternal Son of God, of the same substance with the Father: to know Jesus, both God and man in one Person: to know Jesus Christ, the truest Prophet, the greatest King, the highest Priest in the world: to "know Jesus Christ, and him crucified:" to know how this glorious, this almighty, this divine Person was abused by his own creatures; how he was apprehended, arraigned, accused, and condemned as a criminal; how he was derided, scourged, spit upon, crowned with thorns, and led among the vilest of malefactors to

the place of execution; how he was there fastened to a piece of wood, with nails drove through his blessed hands and feet, the most nervous and sensitive parts of the whole body; how he hung in this sad ignominious posture for three long hours together, and all that while endured not only the most exquisite pains that could be imagined in his body, but such a sense of his Father's displeasure in his soul, as made him cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and how, after all this, the pains of death coming upon him, the Lord of life himself gave up the ghost and died; and died upon the cross, the only cursed death that any man could die; to know that Jesus Christ was thus crucified, and that he was crucified thus for the sins of men, and for our sins among the rest; what can, if this doth not, dissolve us all into tears, into tears of true repentance for those sins which were the occasion of it? How can we know that Jesus Christ was crucified for sin, and not dread the thoughts of God's displeasure against it? How can we know that he was crucified for our sins, and not abhor and leave them? Surely, it is impossible! it is impossible that our minds should be filled with such a knowledge of Christ as this, and yet retain any love for sin,—for any sin whatsoever. And, therefore, the apostle saith, "That men escape the pollutions of the world,"—and so the dominion of all manner of vice,—“through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ¹,” this being the most effectual means to do it, and that which never fails: inso-much that, whosoever lives in any known sin may be confident that he doth not know Christ as he ought.

And the great reason is, because he who thus knows Christ, what he hath done and suffered for mankind, cannot but believe and trust on him as his only and all-sufficient Saviour. And he, who doth that, is thereby entitled to all the promises of the Gospel,

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 20.

for every thing necessary to his being saved: they being all made to those, and to those only, who believe in Christ. Hence it is, that we are so often said to be “justified by faith,” to be “saved by faith,” to be “sanctified by faith,” to be “purified by faith,” to “resist the devil by faith,” and to “overcome the world by faith.” Neither is there any other way whereby it is possible for a man to do it. I speak it confidently, because I have God’s own word for it, saying, “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God²?” If there were no other, as there are a great many, this one place of Scripture is sufficient to demonstrate against all the Pelagians, Socinians, Arians, and Mahometans in the world, that no man can ever truly overcome it, so as to be and do good in it, except he believe in Christ. Whereas he who doth this, can “do all things through Christ which strengtheneth him.” But as no man can know Christ aright, but he must needs believe in him; so no man can believe aright in him, unless he first know him. For “how can he believe in him of whom he hath not heard³,” and so doth not know what to believe? And, therefore, “to know Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” is so useful, so necessary for all men, that no man can be either holy or happy without it.

From hence; by the way, we may observe the great wisdom and piety of our Church, in setting apart certain days every year, whereon to commemorate the most material things relating to our Blessed Saviour, his advent in general, his incarnation, his birth, his circumcision, his manifestation to the Gentiles, his presentation in the temple, his fasting forty days, his crucifixion, his resurrection, his ascension into heaven, his sending the Holy Ghost, and his evangelists and apostles, who wrote and propagated his Gospel; which, put together, make up a kind of practical Catechism, whereby people are instructed in the knowledge “of Jesus

² 1 John v. 5.

³ Rom. x. 14.

Christ, and him crucified." And, for the same reason, she appoints the three Creeds, one to be read every day; another, which is something fuller, every Sunday and Holyday; and the third, which is fullest of all, every month throughout the year; in every one of which Creeds most of the articles are concerning our Blessed Saviour. Which shews the great care the Church hath taken that all who live in her communion may be sure to know him. And, accordingly, we also, who are intrusted by her with the administration of Christ's holy word and Sacraments to them, are bound in duty and conscience to take the same care. It is true, we must tell them of the sins which they ought to avoid, and of the duties they ought to perform to God, and to one another; but we must likewise preach unto them "Jesus Christ, and him crucified:" otherwise we may preach our hearts out; the people will never be the better for it. For unless they know and believe in him, they can neither avoid the sins, nor perform the duties, we tell them of; and so all our preaching will be in vain, and to no purpose. This we may well be confident of, for St. Paul himself, the great apostle, was so; as appears from his making this his great, his only care in all his preaching: "I determined not," saith he, "to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Neither would I have you think that this is such a dull, insipid doctrine, as some would make it: for "to know Jesus Christ, and him crucified," is certainly the greatest; the greatest, did I say? pardon the expression, it is the only true joy and comfort of our hearts. The knowledge of other things may please our fancies, but this alone can satisfy and delight our souls. For whatsoever we may know besides, I am sure we all know ourselves to be sinners; and if sinners, then liable to the wrath of God, and all the miseries that he can inflict upon us: the thoughts whereof cannot but sometimes make us sad and melancholy, notwithstanding all our outward mirth and jollity. But to know that Jesus Christ came into the

world to save sinners, such sinners as we are: that the eternal Son of God himself, by the "one oblation of himself, hath made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world," and for ours among the rest: that "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities:" that "he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification:" that "he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him:" that "he is now our Mediator and Advocate in heaven, always making intercession for us:" that "his grace is always sufficient for us;" "his strength is made perfect in our weakness," and his power resteth continually upon us, to guide and assist us while we live, and then to bring us to himself in glory: this refresheth our drooping spirits; this fills our souls with solid and substantial joy, "with joy unspeakable, and full of glory;" this makes us sing with the blessed Virgin, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour." Give me but this, and let who will take all the pleasures of the world besides, and glory in them: I shall never envy their felicity. "God forbid that I should glory in any thing, save in the cross of Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world:" for this, this is the only way to eternal life; "yea, this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent⁴."

And, therefore, as this is the most excellent, the most certain, the most useful, and the most pleasant, so it is the most lasting knowledge we can ever have, for it is everlasting. It is St. Jerome's advice, "*Discamus in terris, quorum nobis scientia perseveret in cœlo*:" "Let us learn those things upon earth, the knowledge whereof will continue with us in heaven." This is the only knowledge that will do so. When we die, all our other thoughts will perish; but the knowledge of "Jesus Christ, and him crucified," will go with

⁴ John xvii. 3.

us into the other world, and there abide by us, yea, there it will be advanced to the highest perfection it is capable of. "Now we see him through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now we know him in part, but then we shall know him, even as we are known of him ⁵." For we shall live with him, behold his glory, enjoy his blessed company, admire and love him for ever.

These things being duly weighed, I need not use any other arguments to persuade those, who hope and desire in good earnest to be saved, to make it their great care and study to get their minds possessed with as true a knowledge, and as deep a sense, of Christ their Saviour, as possibly they can; but shall conclude this, as St. Peter doth his second epistle:—

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

⁵ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

SERMON VI.

THE NEW CREATURE IN CHRISTIANITY.

2 COR. v. 17.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”

ALTHOUGH it be certain from God's own word, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, that he gave himself a ransom for all, that he tasted death for every man, and that he is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world; yet it is certain also, that there are many sinners in the world which shall not be saved by him: yea, we have just cause to fear that but few will be so; few, not in themselves absolutely considered, but few in comparison of the many more that will be damned, notwithstanding all that he hath done and suffered for them. But this cannot possibly be imputed to any defect in his power, who is almighty to save; nor yet to any want of will and readiness in him, who “died for all,” and would have “all men to be saved,” and to “come to the knowledge of the truth.” Where, then, can the fault lie? It can be no where but in men themselves; they will not, and then it is no wonder if they shall not, be saved. Though Christ hath procured it, yet he doth not force salvation upon men, whether they will or no; but he leads them to it in a way suitable to their own nature, as they were made by him reasonable and free agents, capable of knowing and choosing what is good for themselves,

and of refusing what they know to be otherwise. It cost him dear to purchase salvation for them,—nothing less than his own most precious blood; and, therefore, he is pleased freely to offer and propound it to them in his Gospel, if they will accept of it: but if they will not have it, but refuse and slight it, choosing and preferring the things of this world before it, they can blame nobody but themselves, when they come to see their mistake and folly. And yet this is the case of most men. What Christ himself once said to the Jews, “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life¹,” the same may be said to the greatest part of mankind, and of them also who profess to believe in him, and to hope for life and salvation from him; yet they will not come unto him for it: for some are so self-willed, that they will not go out of themselves, nor be beholden to him for their salvation; others wilfully shut their eyes, and will not see the way that leads to him; and of those who have their eyes opened, that they cannot choose but see it, whether they will or no, yet many will not walk in it; they have their trades to mind, or their land to till, they have families to provide for, and bodies to look after. These are things they are sensible of, as being present with them; as for their future state, that is a thing remote and out of sight, and therefore they never trouble their heads about that, so long as they can find any thing else to do; which is commonly so long as they live: and if they ever chance to think of it, as sometimes, perhaps, they may, they bethink themselves also, that they are Christians, they were baptized long ago, and never renounced their baptism, but still continue members of Christ, believing that he is the Saviour of the world, and that he hath done so much to save them, that he hath left no great matter for them to do. As for Jews, and Turks, and heathens, they pity their condition, as being without the pale of the Church, and so without any hopes of salvation; but as for their parts, they are

¹ John v. 40.

Christians, and are resolved to live and die so, and never to profess any other religion but that which Christ hath settled in the world; and, therefore, doubt not but, whatsoever becomes of others, they shall be saved.

This is the language, or, at least, these are the thoughts, of most of those who profess to believe in Christ: they profess to do so, and that is all; concerning themselves no more about Christ, than the Turks do about Mahomet, the Indians about Brahmin, or the Jews about Moses; they look upon him as the founder of their religion, and do not question but that he hath taught them the right way to heaven, and therefore hope to go thither when they die, without taking any more care about it. And that is the great reason why, of so many who profess to believe in Christ, there are so few who are saved by him: whereas, if they really did what they profess to do,—even believe in Christ aright, as he hath taught them in the Gospel,—they could not but be saved. But then they would find the Christian religion quite another thing than what they imagined it to be: it would make such a mighty change and alteration in them, that they would be another kind of creatures than what others are, or they themselves ever were before. For if they truly believed in Christ, they would be “in him;” and the apostle here tells us, that “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;” “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new in him.” And to the same purpose he saith elsewhere, that “in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature²,” or, as the word, I think, may be more properly rendered in this place “a new creation,” for the Greek word *κτίσις* signifies both “creation” and “creature;” and the context here seems to require it to be taken in the active sense, because circumcision and uncircumcision are so: but the meaning of the whole is still the same, even that,

² Gal. vi. 15.

whether a man be circumcised or not circumcised, whether he do or do not enjoy such outward rites and privileges, he is neither the better nor the worse; the only thing necessary in the Christian religion, is “the new creation.” If a man be not created anew, whatsoever he hath or hath not, it is all one, he is no true Christian, he doth not truly believe in Christ; for if he did, he would be “a new creature:” and so the word must of necessity be understood in my text, not of the act, but subject; for the apostle here speaks of the person that is in Christ, and saith, that he “is a new creature,” which therefore cannot possibly be understood of the act of creation, but the thing created: “If any man,” saith he, “be in Christ, he is a new creature.”

In which words we shall first consider the terms, and then the truth asserted in them. The terms to be explained are two, as in all such propositions, the subject and the predicate, “what it is to be in Christ,” and then, “what it is to be a new creature.” As for the first, it is a phrase which the Holy Ghost delights often to use; and therefore I could never persuade myself but that there is something particular and more remarkable in it than what is commonly taken notice of: I shall not recite the many places where it occurs, but such only from whence the meaning of it may be gathered. “There is therefore,” saith the apostle, “now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus³,” from whence we may conclude, that they are said to be in Christ, who are not only in his Church, but in his Person, so as to be really vested and interested in him,—in his merits, for the pardon of their sins, and in his righteousness, whereby they may be justified, or accounted righteous before God; for otherwise they could not but be condemned. To the same purpose the same apostle, having recounted his own privileges and righteousness which he had in the law, saith, “But what things were gain to me, those I

³ Rom. viii. 1.

counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ⁴.” Where we may observe that he reckons his being in Christ no common or ordinary thing, but the greatest blessing he could ever have: and he expresseth it several ways; first, by his winning Christ, *ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω*, “that I may win or gain Christ to myself,” that he may be mine, my Saviour, my Redeemer, my Lord, as he here calls him: and then he adds, “That I may be found in him.” In him! How? By having his righteousness; that I may be “found,” saith he, “in him, not having mine own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ.” Which shews plainly, that he desired to be found in Christ, so as to have the righteousness of Christ to be his righteousness, that he might be accounted righteous by it; which could not be, unless it was his own: and therefore by being in Christ, he can mean nothing less than such an union to him, whereby a man is reckoned as one with him, and so hath a real interest in whatsoever is in him.

There are many such places in the Holy Scriptures whereby this notion of our being in Christ might be confirmed; but I shall rather choose at present to explain it by that similitude which Christ himself is pleased to make use of for that purpose, where he saith to his disciples, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches⁵.” From whence it appears, that we are said to be in Christ, as a branch is in the vine; but a branch is so in the vine, as to be really a part or member of it, and to partake of all the nourishment, the sap, and juice, and whatsoever is in

⁴ Phil. iii. 7—9.

⁵ John xv. 4, 5.

the stock, it is by secret conveyances carried into the branches, so that every branch hath as much of it as it can hold, and as is necessary to preserve its life, and make it fruitful: and therefore according to this, which is Christ's own similitude, all that are in him, are so in him, as to participate of whatsoever is in him, so far as they are capable of it. But you will say, perhaps, the branch is naturally in the vine, so as to spring out of it, but we are not so in Christ, and therefore the analogy doth not hold good. But the apostle clears this difficulty, by shewing that we are in Christ, as a branch is in a tree, that is, not naturally propagated with it, but inoculated and grafted into it: "And if some," saith he, "of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree⁶." Now, as we take a scion of one tree, and graft it into the stock of another, by that incision it soon becomes of the same body with that into which it is grafted, as if it had naturally sprouted from it, and partakes, as the apostle speaks, of the root and fatness of the stock, as much as the natural branches do: so here, by nature we are all of the old stock, the wild olive, Adam; God, the husbandman, as our Saviour calls him in this very case, cuts us off from the old stock, and grafts us into Christ, the true vine; by which means we are, as it were, incorporated into him, and so partake of what is in him, as much as if we had proceeded from him, as we did from the first man, and in some sense more; forasmuch as we are joined to Adam only by nature, but to Christ by the Holy Spirit himself: for, as the apostle saith, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit⁷," which must needs be the highest kind of union that can be imagined. In short, take it thus:—our whole nature, and so we ourselves, who are of it, being in the first Adam, we were really concerned in every thing that he did, or that was done to him; we sinned in him, we were cor-

⁶ Rom. xi. 17.⁷ 1 Cor. vi. 17.

rupted in him, we were cursed and condemned in him; and so Christ also having taken our whole nature upon him, and being thereby become, as he is called, "the second," or "another Adam," as all are capable of it, so they who are really in him, are really concerned and interested in all that he did or suffered in our nature: in him they are sanctified; in him they fulfilled all righteousness; in him they suffered the death which God had threatened against them; and so in him they are absolved from their sins, and justified before God.

But is there nothing required on our parts in order to our being thus taken out of the first, and put into the second man, even Christ, so as to be found in him? Yes, doubtless; it is required that we truly believe in him: for he himself saith, that "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life^s," and therefore they who do not "believe in him," must needs perish; which they would not do if they were in him: and they who do believe in him must needs be in him, otherwise they could not have everlasting life, that being to be had only in him; whereas by believing in him, they partake of him, and in him of all things necessary in order to it: for, as the apostle saith, "we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end⁹;" that is, If we begin and continue stedfastly to believe God and trust in Christ, we are thereby made partakers of him, and interested in him. And he who is thus in Christ, as the apostle here saith, is "a new creature."

But "a new creature," how can that be? As Nicodemus said, "How can a man be born when he is old?" so may others say, with more shew of reason, Can a thing that is once created, be created again? No, surely, not as to the substance or essence of it, that cannot be created again; but, howsoever, the form and qualities of it may be so changed and altered, that it may be quite another thing than what it was at

^s John iii. 16.

⁹ Heb. iii. 14.

first created, and, therefore, may properly be called a new creature. As the body of a man, at first, was not properly created or produced out of nothing, but was made of the dust of the ground, which was created before, yet it being formed by God out of that dust, and inspired with the breath of life, he is properly called God's creature: so although a man's soul and body are not raised again out of nothing, yet, if he be raised out of a state of sin, and inspired with the Holy Spirit of God himself, he may be as truly said to be a "new creature," this being so great a change, that he is altogether another man than what he was before, for he is now "transformed by the renewing of his mind¹." "Yea," as the apostle saith in my text, "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Though he be the same person he was before, yet he doth not understand, or judge, or think, or will, or affect, or speak, or act, as he did before. He hath now a new sense of things, a new judgment, new desires, new hopes, new fears, new loves, new hatred, new joys, new griefs, and so leads a new life; for he hath "put off the old man with his deeds; and hath put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him²;" or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "He hath put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness³." Where we may observe, that as man was at first, so this new man is created again after God, or after the image of God, consisting "in righteousness and true holiness;" which is the proper form of the new man, and from whence he may therefore be properly called "a new creature." But, for our clearer understanding of this, it will be necessary to take a short view of a man in both his states, in his unregenerate and his regenerate state, as he was born at first, and as he is born again; or, if ye will, as he is in the first, and as he is in the second Adam: by which we may easily discern what a mighty change

¹ Rom. xii. 2.² Col. iii. 9, 10.³ Eph. iv. 24.

is wrought in him, and how properly he may therefore be called "a new creature."

First, as for the old man, the man that is still such as he was born; as he was born, so he lives continually in sin; his mind and conscience is defiled, and all the powers of his soul disordered and out of tune; he was born blind, and so he lives always in the dark, having no light at all, except, perhaps, a little glimmering that may sometimes come through his senses; he may talk and discourse, but he sees no more of God, or any spiritual object, than as if there was no such thing in being. And, therefore, he is wholly under the power of his senses and passions, being affected with nothing but what toucheth and moveth them one way or other. Hence he is often entirely given up to the most brutal vices, as gluttony, drunkenness, whoredom, or the like: or if he happen to be any way free from them, by reason of the temper of his body, or by the outward circumstances of his life, yet these other sins, which the apostle reckons also as parts of the old man⁴, "anger, malice, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, and the like,"—these have all, or most of them, absolute dominion over him. He looks no further than this world, and, therefore, his mind is bent altogether upon the pleasures, or the honours, or the riches, which he fancies in it, and doth all he can to get them, not regarding how. Lying, and cheating, and oppressing, and slandering, and extorting from others, or forswearing himself, he seldom boggles at; neither would he ever stick at theft, robbery, forgery, or murder itself, but only for fear the law might take hold of him; or, if he avoids any of the other sins, it is only lest he should lose his credit, and so his hopes of gaining in the world. He avoids no sin purely out of conscience, for he hath none; much less for fear of God's displeasure, for he never thinks of him, as the Psalmist saith, "God is not in all his thoughts⁵." He may sometimes speak of God, and

⁴ Col. iii. 8. Gal. v. 20, 21.

⁵ Ps. x. 4.

often doth it on purpose to blaspheme and profane his holy name; but he never had the true “fear of God before his eyes,” no, not when he comes into his special presence. As for any private devotions to him, he is usually a perfect stranger to them, not knowing what they mean, or how to go about them if he would; or, if he had been over-persuaded by his parents and others to be now and then in his closet, or by himself, he reads or prays in such a careless and superficial manner, as shews that he doth it only out of custom, or that he might be thought religious; not out of any sense of his duty, or desire to serve or please God in it. And as for the church, if he happens to live in a place where his neighbours go thither on the Lord’s day, it would look very ill if he did not do so too: he had much rather follow his worldly business, but the laws of the land will not suffer him to do that openly; and if he should sit still at home and do nothing, his neighbours might take notice of him, and look upon him to be as he is, a wicked and profane person: and, therefore, once a week, to be even with them, he will walk gravely to mass, or a private meeting, and, perhaps, carry his family along with him; and then he hopes they will look upon him as more religious than themselves; or, if they will not, howsoever he himself will think so; and that is enough for him. And if he goes really to church, where the public worship of God is duly and solemnly performed, it is true, he is there in the right way to have his eyes opened; but until they are so, it is all one where he is: though he can make a shift to tarry here all the while, and perhaps kneel, and stand up, and repeat, as others do, it is only because others do so; for his part, he is no ways affected with any thing that is done here; the whole service is a kind of dull insipid business, that he can find no relish at all in, his mind running all the while about other matters; and as for the word read or preached, it makes no more impression upon him, than it doth upon the stones of the wall, or the seat he sits on. And if any good thoughts happen to

be put in his mind, he gets them out again as fast as he can, that he may not be troubled with them: and that is generally his business the rest of the Lord's day. But for going to church upon the week-days, that he looks upon as a very idle impertinent thing, fit only for lazy people, that have nothing else to do; for his part, he hath greater affairs to mind. The same opinion he hath too of the Lord's Supper: it is three to one whether he ever received the Holy Sacrament in his life, unless it was to qualify himself for some office, or to keep himself out of the reach of the law. For such purposes he may think it convenient to receive it two or three times in a year, but he cannot find any time to prepare himself for it, and so it signifies no more to him than his ordinary food. And thus the poor man lives, as "without God in the world," and so he will do all his life, unless he be renewed and born again.

But now let us suppose him to be so, to be so renewed and born again of God's Holy Spirit, that he is become a new man: what a wonderful alteration is wrought in him! He is now in all respects another kind of creature than what he was before: his mind is purified, his "conscience purged from dead works," and all his faculties reduced to their proper order: he is turned "from darkness to light," and from the "power of Satan unto God:" his eyes are opened, so that he can look at those things which "are not seen:" he sets God always before him, and beholds his wisdom, his power, his goodness, his mercy, and all his glory shining continually about him, and in him; whereby his whole soul is inflamed with love unto him, with longing after him, with rejoicing in him, and is always fixed, "trusting in the Lord:" he lives now by faith, and not by sense; and therefore all sensible objects seem to him what they are in themselves,—as little and low, yea, as nothing in comparison of those great, and high, and spiritual, and most glorious objects that he is always conversing with. Hence it is that he doth not only avoid the more gross and notorious, but all

manner of sin, to the utmost of his power; not out of any by-respects, but because it is sin, or a transgression of God's law, and an offence to him whom he loves above all things in the world. And, therefore, open and secret sins are all alike to him, they are equally the objects of his hatred and abhorrence: he dare no more cheat his neighbour in his shop, than he dare rob him upon the highway: he will murder as soon as wrong him in his name, body, or estate; that is, he will do neither, though he was sure to gain all the world by it: for all this world is nothing to him; his hopes and expectations are all in the other world: "his treasure is there," and, therefore, "his heart is there also." The good things of this world, though he hath them, yet he doth not mind them any farther than to employ them so, as to give a good account of them another day. His main business is to live always in the "true faith and fear of God," and so under his care and protection: for which purpose he is as constant at his daily devotions, as he is at his daily food; and at any time had rather lose his dinner than omit his prayers; and when he is in his closet, he is as careful what he saith or doth, as if all the world saw him, as knowing that he who made all the world doth see him. Besides his private, he is glad of any opportunities he can get of performing his public devotions to God every day, prizing them above all the blessings of this life: he never fears losing any thing by serving God, but always expects, as well he may, to get more at church than he can at home: he doth not use to ride out of town, or take physic, or do any other business upon the Lord's day, but only the business of the day. He prepares himself for it at home; and when he comes to church, as he sure he always doth, he sets himself in good earnest about it, as the greatest work of his whole life. When he prays, he prostrates himself before Almighty God with all the reverence and godly fear, that he can possibly express both in mind and body, lifting up his heart, together with his hands, to him that "dwelleth in the heavens." When he praises

God in the Psalms or Hymns, he doth it “lustily, with a good courage;” his whole soul, as well as body, being raised up to the highest pitch in admiring, adoring, magnifying that almighty and all-glorious Being that is so infinitely above him, and yet so infinitely gracious and merciful to him. When he heareth God’s word read, he receiveth it, “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh in them who believe.” When the same word is expounded or preached to him, he hearkens diligently to it, he seriously considers God’s will and pleasure in it, he applies it to himself, resolving, by Christ’s assistance, to believe and live according to it; and accordingly doth so all the rest of his life. He is sound, orthodox, and stedfast in the faith, not “tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine,” but keeping close to the faith which was “once delivered to the saints,” and hath been ever since professed by the Catholic Church. He is sincerely devout and pious towards God, making it his great care to serve, honour, and please him. He is meek and lowly in his own eyes, modest, sober, and temperate in all things. He is true and faithful to his word, just and righteous in his dealings, kind and charitable to the poor, as far as his estate will bear: he “honours all men, loves the brotherhood, fears God, honours the king.” In short, he endeavours all he can to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless: and if he chance to stumble, he gets up again immediately, and walks more circumspectly for the future. For which purpose he receives the mystical body and blood of his ever-blessed Redeemer as oft as possibly he can, whereby his faith is confirmed in him, and he derives so much grace and virtue from him, that he can “do all things through Christ which strengtheneth him.” This is the life, “the new life,” he constantly leads; and therefore he may well be termed, as he is in my text, “a new creature.”

The terms being thus explained, what it is to be “in Christ,” and what it is to be “a new creature;” we are now to consider the dependence that one of them hath

upon the other, and so the truth of this proposition, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:" which deserves to be duly considered, because at first sight it may seem to contradict the common observation, that Christians are generally as bad as other men; and that all manner of vice and wickedness reigns as much in Christendom, as it doth in Turkey, or either of the Indies. And it must be confessed, to our shame and sorrow, that the observation is not more commonly made, than it is generally true; the greatest part of those who are called Christians being as far from being new and holy creatures, as they who never yet heard of Christ. The truth is, and it is a sad truth, men usually embrace and profess the Christian religion, no otherwise than Turks do the Mahometan, or other infidels the religions of their respective countries,—only because it is the religion of their country, it was transmitted to them from their ancestors, it is now settled among them, and professed by those they daily converse with; and that is the only reason why they also profess it: and then it is no wonder that they are but like other men, when they take up their religion merely by chance, without ever looking any further into it, or considering the mighty advantages it affords them, whereby to become the best and happiest of all creatures.

But we must observe withal, that, as the apostle saith, "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel⁶." "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God⁷." So it is here: all are not in Christ, that are of him, or his religion; neither is he truly a Christian, that is so outwardly, by the mere profession of the Christian faith; but he is truly a Christian which is so inwardly, in his heart, whereby he really believes in Christ, and so partakes of that Holy Spirit that is in him for his sanctification, as well as of his merit, for

⁶ Rom. ix. 6.

⁷ Chap. ii. 28, 29.

his justification before God; being taken out, as it were, from the first Adam, and joined by faith unto the second: for this, as I have shewn, is the proper meaning of this phrase in my text, of our “being in Christ.” And whatsoever others are, who only profess his religion, he who is thus in Christ must needs be “a new creature;” for, as the apostle saith, “he is created in Christ Jesus unto good works⁸,” being in him, he is created anew in him; and this new creation is to good works. This is the end of it,—that he may do good works; which he could never do, except he was in Christ; whereas by being in him, he is fully enabled to do them: as Christ himself assures us, whose words are much to be observed in this case; and therefore we shall briefly consider them here, as we did before in part upon another occasion.

His words are these: First, saith he, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit⁹.” Where we may observe, that he speaks of the very thing we are now upon, even of our “being in him.” And, the better to explain it to us, he compares himself to a vine, his Father to an husbandman, and his disciples to the branches of a vine; which are all members of it, and receive nourishment and strength from it to bear fruit. Now, he saith, that “every branch in him that beareth not fruit, his Father,” as the husbandman, “taketh it away:” which is not to be so understood, as if any fruitless branch was really in him, but only that it seemed to be so. According as he himself explains himself in a parallel case; in one place he saith, “Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath¹.” How can that be? How can a man both have and not have? And how can he that hath nothing, have any thing taken from him? This looks like a contradiction. But he himself clears it in another place, by saying, “Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even

⁸ Eph. ii. 10.⁹ John xv. 1, 2.¹ Matt. xiii. 12.

that which he seemeth to have ²." Which shews that, by his saying before, "what he hath," his meaning was, that he seemed to have it, but really had it not. So here, "every branch in me," that is, "every branch that" seemeth to be in me, and "beareth not fruit, he taketh away," so that it shall not so much as seem to be in him. For that this is the proper meaning of the place appears from what follows: "I," saith he, "am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing ³." For hence it is manifest that, as no man can do any good without him, so no man can abide really in him, but he brings forth much fruit, and, therefore, is a new creature.

To the same purpose is that of his beloved disciple, where, speaking of Christ, he saith, "Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not ⁴," that is, such a one doth not live in any known sin, nor, by consequence, in the neglect of any duty. And the reason is, because "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts ⁵." Their "old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve sin ⁶." If the old man be crucified with him, they must become new men, or nothing at all, in him. If the body of sin be destroyed, the body of grace must be formed in them. And if they cease to serve sin, they must serve God; it being a sin not to serve him. And if they serve him, they must do whatsoever he sets them. And that they must needs do who are in Christ; for if they be in him, they are in the true Vine, and therefore must needs bring forth good grapes. They are in the Fountain of all goodness, and therefore must needs be good; they dwell in him in whom all fulness dwells ⁷, and therefore of his fulness they must needs receive, "and grace for grace ⁸;" that is, all manner of grace requisite to their doing of all the good that God requireth of them.

² Luke viii. 18.

³ John xv. 5.

⁴ 1 John iii. 6.

⁵ Gal. v. 24.

⁶ Rom. vi. 6.

⁷ Col. i. 19.

⁸ John i. 16.

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² Luke viii. 18.

³ John xv. 5.

⁴ 1 John iii. 6.

⁵ Gal. v. 24.

⁶ Rom. vi. 6.

⁷ Col. i. 19.

⁸ John i. 16.

As St. Paul found by experience, when he said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me⁹." And he who can do that, must needs be a new creature.

But, to make it still more plain, we must consider that Christ is the eternal, the only-begotten Son of God, and therefore they who are in him, by a quick and lively faith, they also in him are made the sons of God. "For as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name¹." And if they be the sons of God, they are born again of God himself; if born again, they are new men; and if born again of God the Creator, they must needs be new creatures, and lead new lives, as being acted by the same Spirit by which they were born again, the Spirit of God himself; which, by means of their union to Christ, and being made members of his body, is infused into them, and becomes a principle of new life in them, whereby they are enabled to answer the full character of a new creature much better than I have or can express it. And, therefore, we may well conclude with the apostle, that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

Now from this great doctrine thus briefly explained, among many other things which are very remarkable, we may observe, first, that no man can be a new creature, except he be in Christ; for the apostle here makes our being in Christ, the foundation of the new creation. He doth not say, If a man be a Peripatetic, a Platonist, an Epicurean, a Pythagorean, or any other kind of philosopher, he is a new creature: neither doth he say, If a man be of the Church of Rome, or of the Church of England, a Lutheran, or a Calvinist, he is therefore a new creature. But "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" therefore a new creature, as I have shewn, because he is in Christ. Which is a thing much to be observed; for it quite overthrows that absurd opinion, which some have

⁹ Phil. iv. 13.

¹ John i. 12.

entertained, that a man may be saved in any religion, if he doth but live up to the light of nature, and according to the rules of that religion which he professeth, be it what it will. For it is plain, from what we have discoursed upon this subject, that no man can be saved, except he be within the pale of the Church, except he be of the Christian religion; nor in that neither, except he be really in Christ, and so a true Christian. For otherwise he cannot be a new creature; and if he be not a new creature, if he be not regenerate and born again, and so made the son of God, he can never inherit eternal life: he cannot receive "inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith in Christ," unless he himself be so. Whereas men may cry up the light of nature, and the power of natural religion, as much as they please; they may as well undertake to create a new world, as to make a new creature by it. They may exclaim against vice, and extol virtue as much as it deserves, and, perhaps, make a shift to do something that looks well by the principles of moral philosophy; but they may as soon produce any thing out of nothing, as turn a man "from darkness to light," and "from the power of Satan unto God" by it: yea, they may be admitted into the Christian religion itself, they may make a plausible profession of it, they may do many things in it; but they can no more make themselves new creatures, than they could make themselves creatures. That can be done only by the almighty power of God; and he never exerts that power, but only in him by whom he created all things. And, therefore, unless a man be in him, even in Christ Jesus, he may be confident he is not a new creature.

Again, we may observe from hence, that as he who is not in Christ is not a new creature; so, on the other side, he who is not a new creature, is not in Christ: for the apostle saith expressly, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." And, therefore, men may pretend what they will, and make what shew they can of Christ's religion, they may be baptized into his name, and continue members of his Church: they may

profess to believe in him as their only Saviour, to serve and honour him as their Lord and Master: they may undertake to argue and dispute for him, to vindicate and defend him against his enemies: they may pray unto him, they may read and hear his word, they may admire his divine sayings, they may reverence his ministers, they may approach to his very Table; and yet after all, unless they become new creatures, they have nothing to do with him; they do not truly believe, and so have no part or interest in him. For they are not in him, and so have no ground to expect any thing at all from him.

This is a thing which I heartily wish ye would all take special notice of, and remember as long as ye live. For they who are born and bred where the Gospel is planted, and Christ is often spoken of as the only Saviour of the world, they are apt to expect great things from him; and, indeed, they cannot expect more, nor so much as he can do for them. But then ye must consider that, unless ye be sanctified, and made new creatures by him, so as to walk constantly in newness of life, you are no way concerned in any thing that he hath done and suffered for mankind. For you are not engrafted into him the true Vine, nor made sound members of that body whereof he is head. If ye were, ye could not but be influenced by him, and receive that virtue from him, which would turn all things upside-down in you, and make you quite other men than what you used to be; you would live continually in the fear of God; you would love and honour him above all things in the world; you would serve and glorify him with your whole souls, and bodies too. And unless you be thus “renewed in the spirit of your minds,” so as sincerely to endeavour all ye can to please God; whatsoever pretences you make to Christ as your Lord and Saviour, ye may be sure he will never save you, nor bring you to heaven. He hath told you so with his own mouth, and therefore ye may believe him; saying, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of

heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven²." From whence we may also see the truth and certainty of this observation; for all that are in Christ are sure to go to heaven: the members must needs be where the head is. But none, it seems, can go thither, but only such as are made new creatures, so as to do the whole will of God. And, by consequence, all that are not such, may be confident they are not in Christ, they are no true Christians, whatsoever they may pretend.

And this suggests unto me another thing very observable from these words,—even what a miserable condition they are in, who are not converted and made new creatures. For such, as the apostle speaks, are "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world³." And how miserable must they needs be, who are in such a condition as this! They are without Christ; no more concerned in him, than as if he had never come into the world. They are aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, foreigners to the true Church of God; they have no portion or inheritance in it, as not being naturalized and made free denizens of it. They are "strangers to the covenant of promise," having no interest in any of the promises that God made to mankind in the new covenant. They have no ground to hope for any mercy at the hands of God. They are "without God in the world," without his grace and favour, without his particular care and protection. And all because they are not in Christ, in whom alone the Church is founded; in whom alone the new covenant is established; in whom alone all the mercy we can ever hope for is promised; and in whom alone God ever was, or ever will be, gracious and merciful to any man.

Consider this, all ye that are still in your sins, that have not yet "put off the old man," that do not truly

² Matt. vii. 21.

³ Eph. ii. 12.

believe in Christ, so as to be made new creatures by him: consider this, I say, and then bethink yourselves whether your condition be not as bad as bad can be. I do not deny but that ye may live at present in ease and plenty, your shops or barns may be full of all manner of store, your estates may be great, your credit good, your bodies healthful, and your hearts merry; and so, perhaps, ye may continue some time. But what is all this, when in the meanwhile the Almighty Creator and Governor of the world is angry and displeased with you; and though he gives you these seeming blessings, makes them real curses to you? For he hath pronounced all accursed, who continue not in all things which he hath commanded; which curse can never be taken off from any, but such as are in Christ, who bare it for them: but you are not in Christ, and, therefore, “the curse of God is upon you,” and upon all ye have; and, whether ye see it or no, as yet, one day you will see it whether you will or no. Ye are cursed in every thing ye have; every thing ye have serving only to expose you to more temptations, and so to greater misery. Ye are cursed in every thing ye do; every thing ye do being an offence to God, and so incensing his wrath and indignation more against you. “The plowing of the wicked is sin⁴,” and his very “sacrifice an abomination to the Lord⁵.” Ye are cursed wheresoever ye are; for wheresoever ye are, all the judgments, the dreadful judgments, which God hath threatened in his word against sinners, hang over your heads, ready every moment to fall upon you; and the longer they are in falling, the more heavily they will fall at last: fall they will at last, as certainly as God hath said it; ye do not know how soon, but may be sure it is not long, but ye will find, by sad experience, what a fearful thing it is “to fall into the hands of the living God;” who, ere long, will summon you to appear before his tribunal, and there condemn you to that everlasting fire which is “prepared for the devil

⁴ Prov. xxi. 4.

⁵ Chap. xv. 8.

and his angels," where there is nothing but "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth;" where the "worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" where ye will be punished with "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;" where ye will live with the fiends of hell, and fare only as they do; where all the furies of your own guilty consciences will be let loose upon you, and torment you continually with the remembrance of your former sins; where all the "vials of God's wrath" will be poured out upon you, and your souls will be filled with the frightful apprehensions of it, as full as they are able to hold; where ye will have no light, no joy, no ease, nothing but darkness and horror, pain and anguish both in body and mind, to the utmost extremity: and all this, not for some months, or years, or ages only, but for ever and ever. This is the true state of their case, who live and die, as they were born,—in sin. God grant that none here present may find it so by their own experience; but I am sure there is no way possible to avoid it, but only by Jesus Christ; nor by him neither, except ye believe in him, so as to be made new creatures by him: which I heartily wish ye would consider before it be too late; then ye would need no other argument to persuade you to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness⁶."

Howsoever, to excite you the more to it, I desire you to consider also, on the other hand, how happy they are who are in Christ, who are taken out of the first, and made true members of the second Adam, who in him are created unto good works, and so made new creatures. These are as happy as the other are miserable, as happy as God himself can make them; for in that they are in Christ, in him they have all things that can any way possibly conduce to make

⁶ Eph. iv. 22. 24.

them happy. In him they have infinite merit, whereby their sins are all pardoned and done away, as if they had never been guilty of any. In him they have most perfect righteousness, whereby they are truly accounted righteous by the most righteous Judge of the whole world. In him they have all the graces of God's Holy Spirit to make them like himself, holy in all manner of conversation. In him they have wisdom to direct them in all their ways, and power to protect them against all their enemies. In him Almighty God himself is well pleased with them, and become their Friend, yea, their most loving and indulgent Father. In him they have all the blessings that he hath purchased for them with his own most precious blood; that is, all they can ever want or desire to make them completely blessed.

Wherefore, if there be any such among you at this time, as I hope there are, give me leave, in few terms, to congratulate your happy state both in this world and the next. What your condition is, as to the things of this world, I know not; but this I know, that whatsoever it is, it is the best, the happiest you can be in: yea, God himself knows it, otherwise he would never have brought you into it; for he hath that special love for his own children, as all new creatures are, that he suffers nothing to befall them that can do them hurt, nothing but what shall one way or other do them good. If the good things of this life be good for you, you shall have them; if they be not, ye shall not have them, for that only reason, because it is better for you to be without them: so that you may rest fully satisfied in your minds, that all things work together for your good; and that nothing can, or ever did, befall you since your new birth, but what was, and shall be, a blessing to you. Ye are blessed in all ye have, for it all comes from the special love and favour of God to you. Ye are blessed in all ye do, for it is all acceptable to God, through him in whom ye are. Ye are blessed wheresoever ye are, for God is always present with you, to guide, assist, and comfort you. Ye are blessed in your souls, blessed in your bodies, blessed in

your going out, blessed in your coming in, blessed while you live, and blessed when ye die; for "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them⁷." Ye will then rest from your labours, from every thing that is troublesome or uneasy to you, from every thing that can any way interrupt or disturb your peace and quiet; and your works, all the good works ye now do in Christ, in him shall be then rewarded "with an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you⁸," where ye will live with him, in whom ye now are, and behold the glory which the Father hath given him; where, in him, your souls shall become "the spirits of just men made perfect;" where, in him, "your bodies shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body;" where, in him, your whole man shall be advanced to the highest degree of bliss and happiness, that ye are or can be made capable of; where, in him, ye shall see God face to face, and enjoy all those infinite perfections which are in him; where, in him, ye shall thus live in light, in glory, in joy itself, not only now and then, but continually; not for some time only, but to all eternity.

Now, if these things be so, as be sure they are, who would not be in Christ? Who would not become a new creature? And, blessed be God! which of us may not, if he will? Christ died for all, and, therefore, is ready to receive all that come unto him. He himself hath said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out⁹." Let us, therefore, now take him at his word; let us go unto him, and close with him upon the terms he hath propounded in his holy gospel; and for that purpose let us walk constantly in all those ways that lead towards him. Let us fast, and watch, and pray, and read, and hear, and meditate upon his holy word, and receive his mystical body and blood; so

⁷ Rev. xiv. 13.⁸ 1 Pet. i. 4.⁹ John vi. 37.

that ‘we may dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we may be one with Christ, and Christ with us.’ But, all the while, let us still believe and trust on him ‘to create in us a clean heart, and to renew a right spirit within us;’ to crucify our old man, and to make us new creatures,—creatures after his own heart; and to keep us always firm and stedfast in his true faith and fear; that we may both live and die in him, our dear and ever-blessed Redeemer, the eternal, the only-begotten Son of God; “To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory for ever and ever.”

SERMON VII.

A SPIRITUAL LIFE THE CHARACTERISTIC OF A
CHRISTIAN.

ROM. viii. 9.

“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

THESE words may give us just occasion to speak of the Holy Spirit of God, and the wonderful works he hath done, and still doth, in the world. “But who is sufficient for these things?” “Who can express the noble acts of the Lord, or shew forth all his praise?” Who can describe his infinite glory, or declare his gifts and graces, that are innumerable? This is a subject fit for the pen or tongue of an angel. We mortals upon earth know nothing of him but what he himself is pleased to tell us in his holy word; and what we there read can never enter into our minds, unless he himself also be pleased to open our understandings, and so make way for it. But our comfort is, that our Blessed Saviour hath assured us, that he, and, in him, “our heavenly Father, will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him¹.”

“In confidence whereof, we therefore humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, to give us thy Holy Spirit, to lead us into all truth, that, by his inspiration and direction, we may have a right judgment in all

¹ Luke xi. 13.

things, speak nothing of him but what is true, and receive the truth in the love of it; to the glory of thy great name, through Jesus Christ our mediator and advocate, now appearing in thy presence for us."

Having thus prayed to Almighty God, in the name of his Son, to direct and assist us by his Holy Spirit in speaking of him; and nothing doubting but that he, according to his word, hath granted our request; we shall now make bold to do it, from the words which I have now read: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Wherefore, we may first take notice, that in the former part of this verse he is called the Spirit of God, in this latter the Spirit of Christ, to teach us, that he is the Spirit of Christ, as Christ is God, and that Christ is truly God, one with the Father; otherwise the same Spirit could not be the Spirit of Christ and of God too. And as he is thus usually in Holy Scripture called sometimes the Spirit of God, and sometimes the Spirit of Christ; so, at other times, he is called absolutely the Holy Spirit, or, which is the same, the Holy Ghost, especially where the three divine Persons are all named together, as in Matt. xxviii. 19. 2 Cor. xiii. 14. 1 John v. 7, to shew, that although he be the Spirit both of the Father and the Son, yet so as to be a distinct Person from both, as each of the other Persons also is; as in the place last quoted, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." They are expressly said to be three, and three in the masculine gender, that is commonly used to signify a person; whereby we are given to understand, that they are three distinct Persons, properly so called, according to our common way of speaking: but then it follows, οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι, "these three are one," three in the masculine, one in the neuter gender; not εἷς, one person, but ἐν, one thing, one Jehovah, one essence or substance: as the Son himself also asserts of himself and the Father².

² John x. 30.

And, therefore, whatsoever personal distinctions (which we can never comprehend) there may be between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, either among themselves, or in their ways of working, yet we must still apprehend and believe them all three to be but one and the same God; for, as St. Paul expresseth it, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all³." Here is one Spirit, one Lord Jesus, one God the Father; these all and every one worketh all in all, and, therefore, must needs be all one and the same first Cause of all, or, as we say, one God.

It is true, our finite understandings, in their highest perfection, could never reach this, no more than they can any other of those infinite perfections which we believe to be in God; much less can we do it in our corrupt and imperfect state. But the best of it is, as we are not able, so we are not bound to understand it, but only to believe it: and we have all the reason that can be to believe it, in that it is revealed to us by God himself, and, therefore, also revealed, that we might believe it, upon his word, without troubling our heads about the way and manner how three distinct divine Persons subsist in one and the same divine essence, so as to be one and the same God; which being infinitely above us, it would be the height of pride and presumption in us to offer at bringing it down to our capacities. It is sufficient for us, that we have the infallible word and testimony of God for it; and that we accordingly believe, that "the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God; and yet they are not three Gods, but one God: that God the Father made us, God the Son redeemed us, and God the Holy Ghost sanctifieth us;" and yet that one and the same God made, redeemed, and sanctifieth us: for whatsoever is said in the Holy Scriptures to be done by

³ 1 Cor. xii. 4—6.

any of these divine Persons, the same, in other places, is said to be done by God. But there is only one living and true God; and, therefore, although we must believe in each Person distinctly, contemplate upon what he hath done, and, upon occasion, address ourselves to him as such, yet we must still keep close to the Unity of the divine essence or substance, which, if it was divided or divisible, would not be divine.

As when I think of God the Son, as in a peculiar manner my Redeemer and Saviour, I must not apprehend him as any other but the one living and true God, that made and governs the world, and accordingly praise and magnify him as such, as the Blessed Virgin did, saying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour." And when we read, as we do in my text, or speak of the Spirit of Christ, although we must believe the Spirit to be one Person, and Christ another, yet we must still believe them both to be one in nature or substance, both the one almighty and eternal God; who, whether he act as Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, it is still one and the same God that doth it.

As in the former part of this verse it is said, "If the Spirit of God dwell in you;" in the next verse, "If Christ be in you:" so in several other places of holy writ, sometimes Christ is said to be, or "dwell in us⁴." At other times, the same thing is expressed by the Spirit's being or dwelling in us⁵, whereby we are given to understand and believe, that Christ and the Spirit is the same God; so that wheresoever either dwells, that is the temple of God⁶. Hence, also, it is, that as our Saviour often promised his disciples, that when he was gone from them he would send them his Holy Spirit; he elsewhere promised the same thing, by saying, that he himself would come to them⁷; that we may never doubt but that, howsoever Christ and the Holy Spirit are distinguished from one another,

⁴ Eph. iii. 17. 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

⁶ 1 Cor. iii. 16.

⁵ 1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19.

⁷ John xiv. 18.

as well as from the Father, by their personal properties, yet in essence, or nature, they are the same. Which I therefore observe here, and desire you to keep it always in your minds, because it will be of great use both to the settling your faith aright concerning the most Holy Trinity, and likewise to your understanding of what we are further to consider in these words.

The next thing to be considered here is, that the Holy Spirit is here called "the Spirit of Christ," "the Son of God;" as he is also, 1 Pet. i. 11; Phil. i. 19; Gal. iv. 6. And, therefore, although it be no where expressly said that he proceedeth from the Son, as it is that "he proceedeth from the Father⁸," yet we have the same ground to believe the one, as we have to believe the other; forasmuch as to be the Spirit of the Son is but another way of expressing his procession from him; and the clearer of the two, in that it can admit of no dispute, as the other may: which I therefore observe, because by this we may see, that, although the Greek Church doth not agree with the Latin in the word, yet they do in the thing; they own the Spirit to be the Spirit of the Son, as well as of the Father, which is the same thing in effect with what we mean by his procession. And, therefore, whatsoever reason they may have to be against the inserting the word "Filioque" into the Nicene Creed, without the consent of a General Council, we have none to accuse them of any great error, much less of heresy, in the great article of our faith.

But why is he here called, in a special manner, "the Spirit of Christ?" This is that which I design chiefly to inquire into; for as there is great reason, doubtless, why every thing in Holy Scripture is expressed just as it is, so in this place particularly, why the Holy Spirit is not called the Spirit of the Father, or the Spirit of God, nor simply the Holy Spirit, but, in a peculiar manner, the Spirit of Christ. And that which I con-

⁸ John xv. 26.

ceive to be the reason in general, is this, because the apostle is here speaking of the Holy Spirit, as given by Christ to those who believe in him, and to none else, saying, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" and, therefore, it was most proper to call him here, the Spirit of him by whom he is given. But there being more in this than what may appear at first sight, I shall endeavour to explain it more particularly in these following propositions.

1. God the Father is represented to us in Holy Scripture as the Maker and Governor of the world in general; and God the Son as the Saviour and Redeemer of the world in particular. He hath been so all along, ever since their fall, continually working in them "both to will and to do of his good pleasure;" according as he himself said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work⁹."

2. As God the Father made and preserveth all things by his word and Spirit, according to that of the Psalmist, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth¹⁰," so God the Son carrieth on and accomplisheth his great work of saving men by the same Spirit as proceedeth from him, and so in a peculiar manner his Spirit.

3. By this it was that he revealed himself and his will, and all things necessary for men to know, believe, or do, that they may be saved. For as he raised up prophets in all ages to do it, so what they spake, as such, was first dictated to them by the Holy Ghost, which came upon them, and entered into them, so that they were filled with the Holy Ghost, when they spake¹. And it was he that spake by them². Thus "all Scripture was given by inspiration of God³." "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost⁴." And, therefore, whatsoever they

⁹ John v. 17.

¹⁰ Ps. xxxiii. 6.

¹ Numb. xxiv. 2. Ezek. ii. 2. Luke i. 41. 67; ii. 25, 26.

² 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

³ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

⁴ 2 Pet. i. 21.

spake as prophets, is expressly said to be spoken by the Holy Ghost: "David said by the Holy Ghost⁵," saith our Lord. "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet⁶," saith St. Paul. Yea, the very types and ceremonies of the Mosaic law were all ordained by the Holy Ghost; as we learn from the apostle, where, speaking of the high priest's going once every year alone into the second tabernacle, he saith, that "the Holy Ghost thereby signified, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest⁷." From whence we may see, by the way, how grossly they are mistaken that imagine, and have had the confidence to assert, that Moses borrowed his rites and ceremonies from Egypt or Babylon, notwithstanding it is so plain from hence, that they came from heaven, being ordained by the Holy Ghost himself. And as the prophets under the law, so under the Gospel the evangelists and apostles, never said, or did, or wrote any thing as such, but by the motion and direction of the Holy Ghost; as we find all along in the New Testament.

Now this Holy Spirit, by which the prophets and apostles were acted, is expressly said to be the Spirit of Christ, and that, too, by his own direction in St. Peter, saying, "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify⁸." The same thing appears also in the prophets themselves; for they speaking as they were moved by the Spirit of Christ, Christ himself often speaks in them of himself, as one with that Spirit by which they spake; as where he saith, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture⁹." "They pierced my hands and my feet¹." "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced²."

⁵ Mark xii. 36.

⁶ Acts xxviii. 25. Acts i. 16. Heb. iii. 7; x. 15.

⁷ Heb. ix. 8.

⁸ 1 Pet. i. 10, 11.

⁹ Ps. xxii. 18.

¹ Ver. 16.

² Zech. xii. 10.

“Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell³.” There are many such places in the prophets, where Christ himself speaks of himself in his own person, to convince us that it was by his Spirit they spake, and that it was he they meant when they said, “Thus saith the Lord.” And hence also it was, that Christ promised his apostles that he would send the Holy Spirit unto them⁴, to let them know it was by his Spirit they should be acted and directed in preaching and propagating his gospel. So that all the revelations that Almighty God hath given us of himself, and his holy will, they all came by his Holy Spirit, as he is in a peculiar manner the Spirit of Christ, the great Prophet of the world.

4. As God our Saviour hath thus revealed his will to mankind by his Holy Spirit, so by the same Spirit he enables them both to know and to do his said will, which otherwise they would not; for though the words (at least the original) whereby he hath signified his mind to us, what he would have us believe and do, be ever so clear and plain, yet the things themselves signified by those words are some of them so much above us, and others so contrary to our corrupt nature, that we cannot of ourselves receive or apprehend any of them aright. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned⁵.” As sensible things can be discerned only by our senses, and rational by reason only; so spiritual things, such as are revealed by the Spirit of God, can be discerned only by the same Spirit that revealed them; without which we can discern no more of them, than we can the proper objects of our reason without the use of our reason, or such as are sensible without our senses. Hence it is, that men of parts and learning, and great capacities in other things, yet, notwithstanding, are often incapable of such things as are purely of divine revelation: they cannot get

³ Ps. xvi. 10.

⁴ John xv. 26; xvi. 7.

⁵ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

it into their heads how such things should be, and therefore oppose them, and argue with all their might against them, as if they were impossible, or at least improbable, because not agreeable to the ideas, as they are pleased to call them, or notions, which they have of other things: when, after all, the only reason why they cannot apprehend so far, at least, as to believe such things as are revealed by the Spirit of God, is, because they are not taught of God, nor endued and assisted by the same Spirit by which they are revealed.

But it is quite otherwise with those who are acted and influenced by the Spirit of Christ. By him their minds are so enlightened, that they see into the truth of all that is revealed by him, more clearly than other people can the most obvious things that lie before them; by him they are taught so effectually, as to “know all things that are necessary for them to know”⁶. By him they are kept from all damnable errors, and led into all truth, so as to receive it in the love of it⁷. By him they are as fully assured of the great mysteries of the Christian religion, as any philosopher can be of the most undeniable point in mathematics: by him, moving upon their souls, and reducing them into a right frame and temper, they are regenerated, sanctified, and renewed in the spirit of their minds, so as clearly to discern the vast difference between good and evil, between what God hath commanded and what he hath forbidden, and, therefore, cannot but of their own accord choose the one, and refuse the other; their thoughts, their understandings, their judgments, their affections, are all so renewed, as not only to see, but feel and relish, all those divine truths and laws which are revealed in the Holy Scriptures by the same Spirit by which they are so renewed. These are they which are here said to “have the Spirit of Christ,” and therefore belong to him.

But “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” If a man be not thus acted and sancti-

⁶ John xiv. 26. 1 John ii. 20. 27.

⁷ John xvi. 13.

fied by "the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" he is not in the number of those whom Christ looks upon as his own proper and peculiar people, so as to take particular care of them, and intercede continually in heaven for them, that they may be preserved from all evil here, and live with him for ever hereafter.

That we may understand this aright, we must know, that, although it be certain that Christ died for all men, so that all men are capable of being saved by him, yet it is as certain also, that all men shall not be saved by him; and that none shall be so, but only such as believe in him, and so apply the merits of his death to themselves, for their pardon and justification before God: but this the greatest part of mankind will not do. I speak not only of Jews, Turks, and other infidels; but they also who profess to believe in him, generally do no more than profess it: there are but few that really do it; but few that believe in him, as he requires it in his holy Gospel, with such a faith that purifies their hearts, and unites them to him, so as to make them sound members of that body of which he is the head; yet these are the only persons whom Christ reckons his own: none else have any part or portion in him, nor he in them, no more than if he had never died for them; and therefore he leaves all such to the wide world, to the general providence of God, to shift for themselves as well as they can: and howsoever they may seem to live in this world, they can never be truly happy, neither in this nor the next. But as for such who constantly live with a quick and lively faith in him as their only Lord and Saviour, and always behave themselves accordingly, Christ looks upon them as his own, his inheritance, his lot, his peculiar people, his elect, his friends, his treasure, his sheep, his flock, his disciples indeed, his brethren, yea, his very members, according to their respective places and stations in his body the Church; as we find all along in his Holy Scriptures: these he hath a special kindness for, and is now appearing in the presence of God, making atonement and reconciliation for them. These,

considered together, are properly the household of God, the communion of saints, his domestic servants, who make it their constant business to serve him, and so continue always in his love and favour: He “prays for these: he prays not for the world, but for these which God hath given him out of the world⁸.” These, all and every one go to God by him; and therefore he is always interceding for them⁹, that they may want nothing that is good, nothing that is needful, to their obtaining eternal salvation by him.

Now, how happy must they needs be, who have such a powerful mediator and advocate always at the right hand of God! But who are they who are thus happy? They who have the Spirit of Christ, and none else, no, not one; for the apostle here speaks in the singular number, saying, “If any man, whatsoever he be, if he have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;” whereby he plainly shews, that no man in the world, whatsoever his condition be, belongs to Christ, so as to be saved by him, unless he have the Spirit of Christ.

And the reason is plain, for it is only by his Spirit that any man can be made his: it is impossible that we, who are so infinitely below him, could be so nearly related to him, as to be his, in such an high manner that this phrase imports, any other way than by his own Spirit: but by that we are incorporated into him, and made members of his body; “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body¹,” even the body of Christ. By which means, as all the members of a natural body being informed by the same soul that is in the head, and from thence is diffused into them, do therefore properly belong to that head; so we are therefore only the members of Christ, and belong to him, because the same Spirit that is in him is likewise in us; and moves, animates, and influences us in all the actions of the new and spiritual life. Hence it is, “that as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the Sons of God²,” for, having the same Spirit that is

⁸ John xvii. 9.

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

⁹ Heb. vii. 25.

² Rom. viii. 14.

in his only-begotten Son, they, according to their capacities, thereby stand in the same relation to God as he doth; they are properly his sons also; insomuch that Christ himself "is not ashamed to call them brethren³."

And the reason which the apostle there gives for it is, because "he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one;" both he and they have one and the same Spirit, and, therefore, must needs be the children of one and the same Father; and by this it is that we know we are so: for if "we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father, the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God⁴."

Hence it is, also, that St. John saith, "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us⁵." And "hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit⁶." For if he hath given us his Spirit, our bodies are thereby made "the temples of the Holy Ghost⁷." And when the Holy Ghost hath taken possession of us, and continues to dwell in us, we are no longer our own, but his, whose Spirit the Holy Ghost is; "and joint-heirs with him⁸," "who is heir of all things⁹." We may be sure of it, in that he hath given us "the earnest of the Spirit¹⁰," "which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession¹." And this earnest of the Spirit is so certain and infallible a sign of our right and title to the said inheritance, that we are said to be sealed by it "unto the day of redemption²." For by giving us his Holy Spirit, Christ sets, as it were, his seal upon us, and so marks us out for his own, and distinguisheth us from the rest of the world. It is by this that the sheep shall be known from the goats, the heirs of heaven from the children

³ Heb. ii. 11.⁴ Rom. viii. 15, 16.⁵ 1 John iii. 24.⁶ Ib. iv. 13.⁷ 1 Cor. vi. 19.⁸ Rom. viii. 17.⁹ Heb. i. 2.¹⁰ 2 Cor. i. 22; v. 5.¹ Eph. i. 14.² Eph. iv. 30.

of disobedience, at the last day; and then it will appear to all the world, "that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

And if so, how much doth it concern us all to have the Spirit of Christ! Infinitely more than any thing else in the world besides: for seeing Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of mankind; seeing he saves none but such as belong to him, so as to be properly his; and seeing none are his, but only they who have his Spirit; unless we have his Spirit, we shall be lost and undone for ever. And, therefore, as we tender our own welfare, we must make our chief care and study to get the Spirit of Christ; whatsoever we get besides will signify nothing to us at the last day, unless it be to torment and vex us. But if we have the Spirit of Christ, we shall then have all things we can desire; for then we shall be found in the number of his sheep, and accordingly shall be placed on his right hand, and hear him pronounce that blessed sentence upon us, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world³."

But the great question is, how a man may have the Spirit of Christ? Or, what he must do to get and keep it? To that I answer, that Christ having assumed the common nature of all men, all men are doubtless capable of his Spirit; but none actually receive it, but such only as are united to him, and made members of his body; they partake of his Spirit, as the members of a man's natural body do of that which is in the head; but none else can have it.

Now, in order to our being thus united to Christ, as to have his Spirit, it is first necessary that we believe in him. "He that believeth on me," saith Christ, "as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he," saith the evangelist, "of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive⁴." And his apostle, speaking of him to the Ephesians, saith, "In whom also after that ye believed,

³ Matt. xxv. 34.

⁴ John vii. 38, 39.

ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise⁵." From whence it appears, that no man can have the Spirit of Christ until he believes in Christ, whose Spirit it is; but that all who believe in him have it effectually conferred upon them.

But, for that purpose, he who believes in Christ, must be baptized into him; that being the sacrament appointed by himself, whereby we testify our belief in him, and the usual means whereby he gives his Spirit to us, and so makes us his own: for baptism is "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost⁶." We are thereby "born of water and of the Spirit⁷." Water is the sign, the Holy Ghost the thing signified, whereby "we are born again and made the children of God;" because we are, by that means, inserted into the body of his Son Jesus Christ; as appears from the very words of institution, which, according to the original, run thus,—“Go ye therefore, and make all nations disciples, by baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost⁸.” For seeing we are made his disciples by being thus baptized according to his institution, we are thereby admitted to be members of his body, and then, of course, partake of his Holy Spirit.

From whence we may see, by the way, the great necessity of this sacrament, where it may be had, and what a desperate condition they are in, who live in the contempt or neglect of it, as many do in this corrupt age; and, perhaps, some here present at this time. But I heartily wish that all such would seriously consider, that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of the world; that he saves none but those who are of his own body, the Church, and so properly his; that none can be made his, but by being baptized according to his appointment; and, therefore, that all such as wilfully neglect or refuse this holy sacrament, and so live and die without it, are none of Christ's flock, and have no more ground to expect ever to be saved by him,

⁵ Eph. i. 13.

⁷ John iii. 5.

⁶ Tit. iii. 5.

⁸ Matt. xxviii. 19.

than other infidels and heathens have, nor, indeed, so much; forasmuch as the others know not that Christ ever ordained this sacrament for the admission into his Church, and so to a state of salvation; these know and condemn it. Wherefore, if there be any here, who, through the error or negligence of their parents, were not baptized in their infancy; and, through their own default, have not yet had this sacrament administered to them, I beseech you, as you tender your own salvation, put it off no longer, but prepare yourselves as soon as possible for it, lest you die without it, and so be found, at the last day, not among the sheep of Christ, but among the goats, which will be condemned to the "everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels."

And as for you, who are so happy as to be born of water and of the Spirit of Christ, and so made his, take heed that ye do not lose the Spirit which you then received; as you certainly will, if you either renounce the faith into which you were baptized, or live in the constant breach of the vow which you then made. And seeing you cannot but be conscious to yourselves, that you have kept neither the faith, nor your promise, so strictly as ye ought, but have many ways offended, and, therefore, have cause to fear that God hath or will withdraw his Holy Spirit from you, you must constantly pray, as David did in the like case, saying, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me⁹."

But there are some, too many I fear, who were once baptized with water and the Spirit, and so made the children of God and heirs of heaven, but afterwards have proved so undutiful, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate, that their heavenly Father hath, in effect, cast them off, disinherited them, and suffers his Spirit to strive no longer with them. The condition of such is very deplorable, but not altogether desperate; for they having been once admitted into

⁹ Ps. li. 11.

the number of his children, Almighty God hath still so much respect and favour for them, that, upon their repentance and return to their duty, he is ready to receive them again, and to give them his Holy Spirit, to assist them in the performance of it, if they do but ask it of him : we may be sure of it, for we have the word of Christ himself for it, saying, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children : how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him¹?" To them who have been adopted into his family, and made his children, he, as their heavenly Father, will give the Holy Spirit : but to none else ; nor to them neither, unless they ask it, too, according to the rules that he himself hath prescribed for it, heartily, importunately, in faith, in the name of Christ, instantly, and without ceasing. If you thus ask it, he will give you his Holy Spirit, though not immediately, yet in the use of the means which he hath ordained for that end ; especially in the faithful performance of your public devotions to him, when you are met together in his name, to pray jointly to him for it ; to praise his most holy name, and to hear that word which he hath given by the inspiration of the same Spirit, and receive the Holy Sacrament ; Christ himself is always in the midst of such assemblies of his saints, ready to distribute the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit among them². As we often find he did, both in the Old and New Testament, but very rarely, if ever, at any other time or place. And, therefore, as you desire the continual assistance of the Spirit of Christ, you must neglect no opportunity you can get of waiting upon him in his own house, and at his own table, where he usually moves upon those who come rightly disposed for it, and takes them under his own care and conduct.

But then you must take especial heed not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption³." Do nothing that may offend so

¹ Luke xi. 13.

² Matt. xviii. 20.

³ Eph. iv. 30.

divine a guest, lest you provoke him to withdraw himself from you; “Quench not the Spirit⁴,” stifle not those holy motions he puts into your hearts; but do all you can to stir them up⁵, that ye may be “fervent in spirit⁶,” “zealous of good works,” “steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord⁷.”

Having thus shewn that they only who have the Spirit of Christ are truly his, and likewise how ye may all have it, if ye will but seek it as ye ought, there will be no occasion, I hope, of persuading you to endeavour after it all ye can; I shall only desire you to consider, that, unless you have the Spirit of Christ, you are still “in the flesh⁸,” that is, in your natural or carnal estate, no better than when he came into the world, or rather much worse; and so long as such, you can never please God, nor do any one thing acceptable in his sight: you are enemies to God, and he is an enemy to you; you have nothing that ye can truly call a blessing, for every thing you have is cursed to you; you have no interest in the merits of Christ’s death, nor in the intercession that he makes at the right hand of God; for you are without Christ, “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, without hope, and without God in the world⁹.” Ye are in continual danger of being condemned to hell-fire; and will certainly be so when ye die, unless ye repent and believe, so as to have the Spirit of Christ while ye live.

Whereas, if you have the Spirit of Christ, and so are his, what a happy condition will ye then be in! Ye will then be free from that bondage, or corruption, to which others are subject, for “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty¹.” Ye will then, “through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body,” and live continually in “newness of life².” Ye will then bring

⁴ 1 Thess. v. 19.

⁵ 2 Tim. i. 6.

⁶ Rom. xii. 11.

⁷ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

⁸ Ver. 8.

⁹ Eph. ii. 12.

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 17.

² Rom. viii. 13.

forth the “fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance³ ;” and whatsoever else can adorn either your hearts or lives, and “make you amiable in the sight of God. Ye will then partake of the divine nature, and “be holy, as he who hath called you is holy, in all manner of conversation :” ye will then have Jesus Christ, whose ye are, always making intercession for you, and washing you from your sins in his own blood : ye will then be safe and secure under the protection of the Almighty, and need not fear any evil that can happen to you : ye will then live under the light of God’s countenance, and have it shining continually upon you, cheering and refreshing your spirits, more than ye can imagine. Ye have already the earnest of the inheritance, and, therefore, need not doubt, but that, ere long, you will be possessed of it, “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you⁴.” And all because ye have the Spirit of Christ, and so are his, whose all things are, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory now and for ever. Amen.

³ Gal. v. 22, 23.

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 4.

SERMON VIII.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF SUPERIORS TO PROMOTE RELIGION.

PSALM ii. 11.

“Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.”

ALTHOUGH these words were spoken by David, king of Israel, yet they were not his words, but the word of God himself; as the same royal prophet saith, in his last prophetic words, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue¹.” So it was in his composing and uttering this Psalm; he did it not out of his own head, but as he “was moved by the Holy Ghost:” so that it was God himself that spake it by him. This we cannot doubt of, having it so plainly attested from heaven; for when St. Peter and St. John had told the rest of the apostles and disciples how they had been threatened by the rulers of the Jews, for preaching the Gospel of Christ, “they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a

¹ 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together²,” &c. And they had no sooner said this, and prayed for grace to preach the word with boldness, but immediately “the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness³.” The shaking of the house, and the coming of the Holy Ghost upon them at that time, being wholly out of the ordinary course of nature, could not have happened but by the immediate hand of God; who therefore did, by this means, set, as it were, his seal, for the confirmation of all that his apostles had then said. But they had said, what he himself had said, “by the mouth of his servant David, Why do the heathen rage,” &c. Which being the very words wherewith this Psalm begins, God did thereby own himself to be the author of it, and affirmed it by a miracle; which is more, I think, than can be said of any other particular place of Scripture, after the whole had been so confirmed.

Neither did he, in this extraordinary manner, signify his approbation only of what they had then said concerning this Psalm in general, but likewise of what they added for the explication of it; even that “his holy child Jesus,” whom he had anointed, was the Messiah, or Christ, here spoken of; and that the whole Psalm is, therefore, to be understood of him, and of him only: that it was he against whom the people raged; that he is that Lord, who, sitting in heaven, will “have them in derision,” and “vex them in his sore displeasure⁴” for it: that it is he of whom God the Father saith, “Yet have I set my king,” a king of mine own anointing, “upon my holy hill of Sion⁵,” (where the ark then was, and he sat between the cherubims over the mercy-seat that was upon it :) and that it was he who said, “I will declare the decree:

² Acts iv. 24—27.

⁴ Ps. ii. 4, 5.

³ Ver. 31.

⁵ Ver. 6.

the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel ⁶."

The Spirit of Christ being in "all the prophets⁷," particularly in this, Christ often speaks of himself in the first person so plainly, that it cannot possibly be understood of any other: as where he saith, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell⁸." "They pierced my hands and my feet⁹." "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture¹." So here he saith, "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Whereby he hath declared to the world his eternal Godhead: that he was from all eternity begotten of Jehovah the Father, and therefore must needs be of the same divine nature with him, the same Jehovah; it being impossible there should be any more than one Jehovah², according to his own saying, "I and the Father are one³." This he declares in the first place, as being the foundation of that religion that he hath revealed to the world, and of all our hopes of salvation in it. And, therefore, also in the New Testament this declaration is frequently quoted, always applied to Christ, and great use is made of it for the confirming of his religion⁴, where it is expressly said to be written in the second Psalm: which is another undeniable argument, that this Psalm is to be understood wholly of Christ Jesus.

Having thus declared his eternal generation, as he was God, he then sets forth the great power that is given him, as he is the King before spoken of, set upon Sion, as he is the head of the Church, the Saviour of the world, the Mediator between God and men; for it is only as he is such, that any thing can be given

⁶ Ps. ii. 7—9.

⁹ Ps. xxii. 16.

³ John x. 30.

⁷ 1 Pet. i. 11.

¹ Ver. 18.

⁴ Heb. i. 5; v. 5. Acts xiii. 33.

⁸ Ps. xvi. 10.

² Deut. vi. 4.

him which he had not before: but as he had undertaken to be born of the seed of the woman, and was so in the decree and promise of God from the beginning of the world, and was, therefore, anointed to be a Prophet, a Priest, and a King, too, that he might be able to destroy the works of the devil, and to save mankind; in this respect he there declares, that the Lord hath also said unto him, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Though he was then set upon "the holy hill of Sion (which was therefore holy because he kept his residence there), yet his dominion was to be "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth⁵," so that "all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him⁶." King David himself calls him his Lord⁷, and the Lord of the whole earth⁸. Which title can belong to none but Christ, and to him only as he is God-man, and as such the Saviour of all mankind: for no mere man ever was, nor can be, Lord of the whole earth. God, as such, is the Lord not only of the earth, but of the whole world. But Christ, as he is the Son of man, as well as the Son of God, hath the whole earth in his own possession, and all the nations and people in it subject to his dominion and power. This is here said to be given him by Jehovah, the Lord of heaven and earth: and it is given him on purpose that he may save all that believe in him, and serve him, in whatsoever part of the earth they live. Thus he himself explains this gift of the Father to him, saying unto him, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him⁹." Hence it is that he commanded his apostles to go "and make all nations his disciples, by baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost¹," that so all nations, and all the people in them, both old and young, might

⁵ Ps. lxxii. 8.⁶ Ver. 11.⁷ Ps. cx. 1.⁸ Ps. xcvi. 6.⁹ John xvii. 1, 2.¹ Matt. xxviii. 19.

“be brought into subjection to him, and become his inheritance,” as it is here promised. And, accordingly, at the very time that he ascended up to heaven, he promised his apostles that they should “receive power from him to preach his Gospel, and so, be witnesses to him, not only in Jerusalem, Judæa, and Samaria, but unto the uttermost part of the earth²,” and that he himself would be with them and their successors in doing it, “to the end of the world³.” By which means many “of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues⁴,” upon earth, are advanced to heaven, by his almighty power, who reigns and rules over the whole earth: but for that purpose he asketh it of the Father, who said to him, “Ask of me, and I will give thee,” &c. that is, he prays or intercedes for “all that come unto God by him,” wheresoever they live, and therefore is “able to save them all to the uttermost⁵,” how many soever they be, and will accordingly do it.

Such a mighty prince is the Lord Jesus, “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords⁶,” presiding over all the empires and kingdoms upon earth, and ordering all things in them, so as may conduce to his glory, and to the salvation of all that take his yoke upon them, believe in him, and keep his laws: and, that nothing may be able to impede his saving of them, he hath “all power given him, not only upon earth, but in heaven too⁷.” For God hath now “set him at his own right hand, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body⁸.” So that he is now Lord paramount over the whole creation, and all for the sake of his Church, or the congregation of faithful people dispersed over the face of the earth, that he may bring them at last to reign with him in heaven.

² Acts i. 8.

⁵ Heb. vii. 25.

³ Matt. xxviii. 20.

⁶ 1 Tim. vi. 15.

⁸ Eph. i. 20—23.

⁴ Rev. vii. 9.

⁷ Matt. xxviii. 18.

But as for such as will not believe in him, but rebel against him, and refuse to submit to his laws and government, "He will break them with a rod of iron; and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel⁹," as many have found already by woeful experience, and all shall do so at the last day; when he shall come again, and manifest his supreme authority over the whole earth, by judging all mankind that ever did, or ever shall live upon the face of it.

Now God our Saviour having thus asserted his divine glory and power in the former part of this Psalm, all the rest of it is only a conclusion that naturally follows upon these premisses: for these things being considered, the Holy Spirit in David infers, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth¹⁰," that is, learn from hence, and beware, that you set yourselves no more against the Lord, and against his Christ: but serve the Lord, this mighty Lord, serve him with fear, dreading the thoughts of ever falling under his displeasure; and rejoice with trembling, rejoice that ye have such an Almighty King and Saviour; but do it with fear and reverence of his Divine Majesty and power. "Kiss the Son¹:" adore this the eternal Son of God, the Lord of the whole earth, "lest he be angry" with you for not paying the homage which you owe him, and so you perish in the way, in the way you are going to the other world, and be there "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power²," as you most certainly will, if his anger be kindled, yea but a little, against you. But blessed, thrice "blessed are all they that put their trust" and believe "in him:" he will pray for them, though not for the rest of the world, and so will take them into his own almighty protection; make "all things work together for their good," while they are upon earth; and then bring them to himself in

⁹ Ps. ii. 9.

¹ Ver. 12.

¹⁰ Ver. 10.

² 2 Thess. i. 9.

heaven, where they shall “behold his glory, and enjoy him for ever.”

It was necessary thus to run through this whole Psalm, the better to clear the way to that part of it which I design, God willing, to insist more particularly upon, even, “Serve the Lord with fear:” which otherwise might not have been so well understood; whereas now it is plain and easy. For seeing that Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is spoken of, as I have shewn in the former part of this Psalm, and his dominion is there asserted over all the earth, the conclusion drawn from these premisses must be understood of the same person: and, therefore, by “the Lord,” whom kings and judges are here commanded to serve, we must understand the Lord Christ, “the Son,” as he is here also expressly called, even the eternal Son of God the Father. Not that the Father also is not to be served; but because, as the Son himself saith, “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father³.” This was the great end wherefore the Father hath committed so great authority over all the earth to the Son, that all mankind should serve and honour him, in all respects, as they do, or ought to, honour and serve the Father: for they are both one Jehovah, one God; and, therefore, whatsoever is done to the one, is done to the other; “He that believeth on me,” saith the Son, “believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me⁴.” “He that hateth me, hateth my Father also⁵.” So he that serveth the Son, serveth the Father also. For the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son⁶. And, therefore, it is impossible to serve the one without the other. But whosoever serves the Son, doth, *ipso facto*, serve the Father, that is in him, and one with him.

And besides, no man can serve the Father but by the Son; nor by him neither, without serving of him:

³ John v. 23.

⁵ Ib. xv. 23.

⁴ John xii. 44, 45.

⁶ Ib. x. 38.

as he himself again saith, "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him⁷." For the Father accepts of no honour from men, but what comes to him through his Son, the only Mediator between him and them. How piously, how virtuously soever they may seem to live, and whatsoever honour and worship they pretend to give to God, nothing they do is acceptable to him any other way than by Jesus Christ⁸. "Neither can any man so much as come unto the Father, but by him⁹." And, therefore, they who do not first come unto the Son, believe in him, and serve him, can never be the servants of God, nor do any one thing that is pleasing in his sight. Whereas, they who truly and faithfully serve the Son of God, are so high in the favour and esteem of God the Father, that he hath a particular respect, yea, an honour for them. I should not have ventured upon so high an expression, but that I have the warrant of Christ himself for it, saying, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour¹."

This, therefore, is the Lord, the Lord God omnipotent, whom the kings and judges of the earth are here commanded to serve. Not like David; though he was a sovereign prince in his own country, he had no power over any other, much less over all the kings and judges of the earth, so as to require them to be wise, and to instruct them what to do, and whom to serve: and, therefore, this, and all such places in the Holy Scriptures, where commands are laid upon all the kings and nations upon earth, most evidently shew their divine authority; that they are not of any private interpretation or human invention, but were given by the inspiration of God, the King of kings, the Lord of the whole earth, "by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice. By whom princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth²." They are all but his deputies, or vicegerents, in their respective kingdoms and provinces, his ministers, to execute his

⁷ John v. 23.

⁸ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

⁹ John xiv. 6.

¹ John xii. 26.

² Prov. viii. 15, 16.

laws and judgments. And, therefore, when some of them had conspired and set themselves against the Lord, and against his Christ; he, by his Holy Spirit, issued forth this his divine proclamation, wherein, having first acquainted them with that supreme authority which he had given to his Son Christ over all the earth, he lays this strict command upon all sovereign princes, and their under-officers in all parts of the earth: "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

He, in many other places of his holy oracles, hath required all people to serve him; but here he commands kings and judges, as such, to do it; not only in their private capacities, as they also are men, but likewise as they are kings that govern whole empires or countries, and make laws to be observed by all that live within their several dominions: and as judges or subordinate officers, empowered and commissioned by their respective kings to see their said laws put in execution. It is in this their public capacity, that the universal Monarch of the world speaks to them in this place, and commands them all to serve him, that so their people may do it, not only every one by himself, but all together, as they are a nation, or kingdom, a society of men united together under one common head. As we read in the prophet Daniel, "that to the Son of man was given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him³." So it ought to be all the earth over; and so it will be, when he sees good to ask it of the Father: but when that will be it is in vain for us to inquire, seeing it is not revealed to us.

It is sufficient for us to know, that many kingdoms upon earth have already professed their subjection to him, and that all are bound to serve him; for this command being laid upon kings, as such, it doth not affect their persons only, but their kingdoms, and

³ Dan. vii. 14.

reacheth all that are advised with, or any way concerned in their government, or in devising laws for the better administration of it. They are all obliged by this, and many other divine commands, to serve him in it; who, by his overruling Providence, puts them into such a public station for that end and purpose, that they may be able to do it. But what it is properly to serve the Lord, and how all such both may and ought to do it, are questions that deserve our most serious inquiry; and, therefore, I shall endeavour to search into the bottom of them, and lay them as open as I can in few terms.

What it is properly to serve the Lord may well be made a question; forasmuch as at first sight it may seem to be impossible; for who can serve him that lacks nothing? What can men do for him, who is neither better nor worse for any thing which they do? It is true, he, being infinitely glorious in himself, cannot possibly receive any accessions of glory from any other, much less from his own creatures, who have nothing but what they receive from him; and, therefore, he cannot be said to be served by them, in that sense wherein they are said to serve one another. But he is pleased to look upon them as serving him, when they own or acknowledge his divine glory and authority over them, and shew they do so, by all such means and methods as he, for that purpose, hath prescribed to them: for he having made, and still governing all things for himself, even for the manifestation of his own glory, such of his creatures as reflect upon it, admire it, and manifest they do so in all their actions, and strive what they can that others should do it too; they carry on the same design that he doth in the world, and are therefore said to serve him, in that they are subservient to him in setting forth his honour and glory. Thus all the creatures that he hath made capable of it, as angels and men, are bound to serve their Creator; and unless they do it, they do not answer the end of their creation, but live to no purpose in the world.

Now, as in the creation and government of the world by his word, God hath, and still doth manifest the glory of his wisdom, and power, and goodness; so in the redemption of fallen man by his Son, or Word incarnate, he discovered the glory of his grace and truth, which otherwise, as far as we know, would never have appeared in the world; "For grace and truth came by Jesus Christ⁴." It is in him only that God hath promised grace, or mercy, to mankind; and it is in him only that his truth appears in his fulfilling of the said promises: and, therefore, he is said "to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe⁵," because they give him the glory of these divine perfections, and so truly serve him, which other people do not.

Wherefore, by serving Jehovah the Lord, we are here to understand the setting forth and promoting his honour and glory, as he is the Redeemer of mankind, as well as the Creator and Governor of the world: when men do not only believe all that is recorded, as done and said by him in his holy word, worship and obey him themselves, and trust wholly on him for all things necessary to their eternal salvation; but likewise do what they can "that his name may be glorified⁶," his Gospel propagated, his Church and kingdom upon earth defended and enlarged, his doctrine received, his laws obeyed, his praises celebrated, his servants encouraged, and his supreme authority and dominion owned, admired, and feared by all, "that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father⁷." They, who, in their several places, and according to their several abilities, contribute any thing towards these great ends, and do it heartily, as to the Lord, they truly "serve the Lord Christ," as St. Paul saith the Colossians did, and shall accordingly "receive the reward of the inheritance from him⁸."

From hence it is easy to gather, how any man, in his place and station, may some way or other serve

⁴ John i. 17.

⁵ 2 Thess. i. 10.

⁶ 2 Thess. i. 12.

⁷ Phil. ii. 11.

⁸ Col. iii. 24.

the Lord: but this command being here laid upon the kings and judges of the earth, such as make, and such as execute the laws in every kingdom; I shall take occasion from hence, to shew more particularly how he may and ought to be served by the laws of any kingdom; and by all such as are either consulted with in the making, or intrusted with the administration of them; and, by consequence, how whole "kingdoms also may serve the Lord⁹."

This, I confess, may seem a bold attempt in a private person; but I look not upon myself, in this place, as in a private capacity, but as a public minister, or, as the apostle expresseth it, "an ambassador for Christ¹;" for Christ, the sovereign of the world. It is in his name only I speak, and shall take care to follow the instructions that he hath given in his holy word; not doubting but many will be as glad to hear how they may serve the Lord in such a public station, as I can be to put them in mind of it, according to my bounden duty to our common Lord and Master.

But to set this in such a light that we may all take a full view of it, it will be necessary to prepare the way, by laying down a few general propositions:

1. Almighty God, here called "the Lord," as he is the Maker and Governor, so he is the supreme Lawgiver of the world: "There is one lawgiver," saith St. James, "who is able to save and to destroy²." Who that is, we may learn from the prophet, saying, "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us³." The same Lord that is our judge, or king, and our Saviour, he likewise is our lawgiver, or, as the word may be rendered, "the maker of our laws, or statutes," which he makes only by signifying his will what he would have done; his word being a law to all things that he hath made.

2. This universal Lawgiver of the world, as he hath given laws to all things else suitable to their respective natures, and the ends for which he made them; so he

⁹ Ps. cii. 22.

² James iv. 12.

¹ 2 Cor. v. 20.

³ Isa. xxxiii. 22.

hath given laws to all mankind, as they are reasonable and free agents, and so capable of reflecting upon them, and of observing them upon choice. These laws he first wrote upon the tables of man's heart: when they were defaced there, he published them upon mount Sinai, then transcribed them with his own finger upon two tables of stone; after that he explained them by his prophets, and at last with his own mouth when he was upon earth, adding some new ones, to shew that all the other likewise were given by him.

3. All the laws that God hath made for mankind to observe are recorded in Holy Scripture given by his inspiration, as appears also from the very laws which are there recorded. For who can give laws to all kings, such as that in my text, but he that is the King of kings? Who can give laws to all the people and nations upon earth, but he that is the Lord of the whole earth? Who can give laws to the very hearts of men, to their thoughts, and the secret motions of the will, that never break forth into act, but only he who is the only Searcher of hearts? Who could threaten hell and damnation to those who break his laws, but he who can "destroy both soul and body in hell?" Who could promise eternal life and happiness to such as keep his laws, but he in whose power alone it is to give it? So clearly doth the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures shine forth in the very laws which are there recorded, that he who doth not wilfully shut his eyes cannot but see it.

4. As the supreme Governor of the world hath thus given laws for all mankind to observe, in their behaviour both to him and one another, that every one may govern himself, and order all his affairs and actions according to the will of him that made and preserveth him; so he hath given power to every kingdom or nation to make bye-laws for the security and government of itself, and all the members of it, as such. He himself made such for the children of Israel, when he was, in a special manner, their King, having chosen them out of all other nations to be his own peculiar

people; for that they were nearer of kin than other people to the flesh he designed to take upon him. Besides the moral laws which he gave to mankind in general, he made several "judgments," as they are called, or judicial laws, for this his own people, for the better keeping up of the civil polity, or government, among themselves, and for the better administration of his moral laws to all that lived in that community. But these laws being made only for that nation, and for that only so long as they continued a distinct nation of themselves, they ceased, in course, at the dissolution of their government; and it is not necessary they should be received or observed in any other nation, as our Church hath wisely declared.

5. Although God hath given this power to all kingdoms and nations to make laws for the better support and government of themselves, yet he hath not given them leave to repeal any of his own laws, nor to enact any thing contrary to them. It is usual for a prince, when he grants a charter to a city, or corporation, within his dominions, to give power therein to make bye-laws for the management of the affairs of that community, provided they be no way repugnant to his own or the common laws of his kingdom: if they be, they are null from the beginning. And so are they which are made in any particular kingdom, if they be in the least contrary to any of the common laws of the world, those which the King of kings hath made for all mankind, both kings and people, to observe. In that case, the general law is, that "we must obey God rather than man:" so that people are so far from being obliged to observe such laws, that they are obliged not to observe them. And all such laws, though they may, perhaps, upon some mistake, be made to a good end, yet being evil in themselves, no good can ever come of them; and they who make them expose themselves, and their country also, to the displeasure of God, who will, be sure, vindicate the honour of his own laws, and punish the contempt that is thrown upon them, if not presently, at least one time or other.

6. But when such laws are made in any country, by those to whom the foresaid power is committed, which are agreeable, or no way repugnant, to the laws of God, all that live under that government are bound to observe such laws, in obedience to the laws of God himself, who commandeth “every soul to be subject unto the higher powers⁴” under which he lives, and to be “subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake⁵,” not only for fear of the punishment, which may be inflicted for breach of the law, but for fear of God, who hath commanded him to keep it, and to “submit himself to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake⁶,” for his sake, or in obedience to him, who hath given this power to kings and governors, to make such laws for the defence, security, and benefit of the government, without which it could not so well subsist, nor the people that live under it serve God in peace and quietness. Neither is it possible for subjects to observe those commands of God, whereby he requires their obedience to the powers which he hath set over them, but only in such things as he himself hath not determined, but hath left the determination of them to his deputies, or ministers, in every country, according as the necessities of time and place may require: and, therefore, when he himself was upon earth, in the likeness and nature of man, being, as such, but a subject, he would not take upon him, when desired, to decide a controversy between two brethren that contended about their inheritance, but left them to the law of the land, saying, “Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you⁷?” Though he was then also the judge and divider over all mankind, yet having given power to the magistrates of the country to make laws and appoint judges for the decision of such controversies betwixt man and man, he would not recal his power upon such a particular occasion, but referred the cause wholly to the laws which were made by it, and

⁴ Rom. xiii. 1.

⁶ 1 Pet. ii. 13.

⁵ Ver. 5.

⁷ Luke xii. 14.

caused it to be left upon record, that all people may know that it is his will, that they should submit to the laws of the land where they live, and stand by them in all things wherein they do not contradict his own.

I shall premise only one thing more, which is, that although sovereign princes and emperors have this power of making laws committed to them, yet they seldom or never exercise it without consulting some or other of their subjects which are supposed to understand the state of the kingdom, the temper and circumstances of the people, and what occasion there is for having any new laws imposed upon them; and, therefore, they who are so consulted are accountable to God for what laws they advise, as well as their sovereign is for making them; especially in such empires or kingdoms, as we have several in this part of the world, which are so constituted either originally, or by the favour of their princes, that the sovereign never signs or makes any new law, till such a number of his subjects, or all met together by their representatives, have considered of the matter, and upon mature deliberation agree, advise, and desire it may be passed into a law. In this case all who are called together for such a purpose ought to have the same care of what laws are made, as if they themselves were to make them; for though they are not made by them, yet they would not be made without them: and, therefore, they also are under the obligation which is here laid upon kings, “to serve the Lord” in it.

And how they may do it, may be easily seen from the premisses thus laid down, for from hence we may first observe, that they who have such an opportunity put into their hands of serving God in so high a capacity should make it their chief end and design to serve him in it; for this is one of those common laws which the Almighty Governor of the world hath made for all mankind to observe in all the actions of their life,—even to make his glory the ultimate end of every one of them. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink,” saith he by his apostle, “or whatsoever ye do, do all to the

glory of God⁸." And again, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus⁹," and so for his service and honour. And if this should be the end of every man's actions, much more of such as govern a whole kingdom, or empire. I know all that are consulted in such public affairs ought to serve their king and their country too: but that they can never do, unless they first serve him, upon whose goodwill and pleasure the welfare of all the kings and kingdoms upon earth depends. Neither can they be truly said to serve him, unless they design to do so: although they may, perhaps, do something which he may make for his service, by ordering it so, as that it shall turn to his glory; yet they cannot be said to serve him in it, unless they design it; and design it, too, before all things else, so as to make his glory their first and chief end: otherwise they are so far from serving, that they dishonour him, by preferring something else before him; whereas they, who make his honour the ultimate end of what they do, thereby shew that they own him to be the chiefest Good, the first Cause, and the supreme Disposer of all things; which is itself much for his honour, and therefore a great part of that service which we owe him.

Now they who have thus the service of God always uppermost in their eye, cannot but use the most effectual means they can think of, that others also may serve him, as well as they, in their several vocations and callings; and if they be called to consult about laws to be given to a whole kingdom, they will, in course, contrive and advise, or at least agree to, such as will most conduce to keep up and promote the serving of God, that he may be better known, admired, adored, and worshipped, than otherwise he would be, in the whole kingdom, and all the dominions belonging to it: for the doing of this is that which they are here commanded, and which they themselves are therefore supposed, to aim at;—it is "serving the Lord."

⁸ 1 Cor. x. 31.

⁹ Col. iii. 17.

But for that purpose they must do what they can that nothing may pass for a law among men, that is in the least contrary to the law of God: for his laws, as well as his works, are all made for his honour, that men, by keeping them, might serve him; and, therefore, so far as any human law is repugnant to his divine laws, so much is detracted from his service: and besides that, they who attempt to enact any thing upon earth, that is contrary to what was before enacted in heaven, fly in the very face of heaven, and bid defiance to the Sovereign of the whole world; which is the highest affront and dishonour that is possible for his creatures to cast upon him, and will be accordingly punished one time or other; as they will find to their cost, whether they believe it as yet or no: whereas they, who, in drawing up any human laws, keep as close as it is possible to the laws of God, and make it their great care and study to avoid all appearance of contradicting them, out of an holy fear of displeasing him, thereby plainly declare that they agnize, or acknowledge, his supreme authority over the world, and the wisdom, goodness, justice, and excellency of the laws which he hath made for it, and therefore may be truly said to “serve the Lord with fear,” as they are here commanded.

But the laws of God being written originally in languages that are not commonly understood, there have been, and still may be, doubts and questions raised about the true sense and meaning of some of them; and if this should happen, as it sometimes doth, in the compiling or making any human laws, what course must they take who are engaged in it, that they may be sure to keep within the compass of the divine, and never transgress the bounds which God hath set them? To that it may be answered, that many of the old laws of this, as well as other realms, were at first written in such a language, that few in our days, if any, do fully understand; and many other are so worded, that questions often arise about the interpretation of them; in which case the law itself hath provided a remedy, by

referring it to the judges of the realm to resolve such doubts, and interpret such laws as are in controversy and dispute; and the sense which they, by virtue of their place and office, give of the law, in such a case, is taken for the law, as much as if there was no dispute about it. So here, when God was graciously pleased to commit his laws to writing, he ordered them to be written in such languages as were vulgarly understood of those people to whom they were first committed, and from whom they were to be communicated to the rest of the world: and, foreseeing that doubts would sometimes arise about the interpretation of them, he inserted it into the body of his laws, how he would have them interpreted, even by such as he should choose into the priest's office, to minister to him at his altar, and so have more immediate access to him than other people had; for so saith the law, "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts¹." Not, they "should" only, as it is in our Translation, but "they shall seek it at his mouth," as it is in the original; and so it is made a law, commanding all people to do so; and the reason also is given for it, even because the priest, as such, "is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." He, as a priest, speaks not his own sense, but the sense of the Lawgiver, as being his messenger; as we read of Caiaphas, that "he spake not of himself: but, being high priest that year, he prophesied," or declared that, according to the true meaning of the law, "Jesus should die for that nation²," &c. And when the Lawgiver himself was upon earth, he explained and confirmed the same law with his own mouth, saying to the multitude that was about him, as well as to his own disciples, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not³." Though in themselves they were generally ill men, and therefore not to

¹ Mal. ii. 7.² John xi. 51.³ Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.

be imitated in what they did; yet as they sat in Moses' seat, and so had the power of interpreting the law, all people are here commanded "to observe and do what they said:" and if they happened to give a wrong sense of the law, they were to bear the blame and punishment, not the people that were obliged to take it from them.

And when the Lord Jesus was to ascend in our nature into heaven, he assured his apostles that he would be with them and their successors in the ministry of his Church "alway, even unto the end of the world⁴," that the Holy Spirit should "abide with them for ever⁵," and "lead them into all truth⁶," and that he, "who heareth them, heareth him⁷." By which and the like expressions he did not only promise his apostles, and their successors, the bishops and pastors of his Church, in all ages, to direct and assist them in the execution of their office; but likewise required all people to hearken to them, as to himself, and so to take the meaning of his laws, as they by his direction should interpret them. And accordingly we read, that when there was a dispute among his first disciples about the law concerning circumcision and other Mosaic rites, they sent to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and took their interpretation of the law in that case, as given by the Holy Ghost himself⁸.

And this hath been the sense and practice of the Church of Christ, as might easily be shewn, in all ages. Neither is there any Christian knowledge we know of at this day, but where the ministers of Christ are consulted in all cases relating to religion and the laws of God: particularly in this kingdom, whensoever any laws are to be made, the whole clergy of the realm is summoned to appear, either in their own persons, or by their representatives in Convocation, that they may be ready to give their advice, if there be occasion, in all such cases. Neither doth any law pass, without the advice of the lords spiritual, as well as temporal.

⁴ Matt. xxviii. 20.

⁵ John xiv. 16.

⁶ Ib. xvi. 13.

⁷ Luke x. 16.

⁸ Acts xv. 28.

And, therefore, when any thing is proposed that is repugnant to the laws of God, if they let it pass without shewing it is so, the fault will lie at their door, and they must answer for it at the last day. For it is to be supposed that none of the assembly would agree to any such thing, if they knew it to be such; so that this is certainly the best course that could be taken, for those who are advised with to make laws, that they may be sure not to dishonour or offend, but serve the Lord by it.

But they will still serve the Lord more effectually in this high and honourable station, if they likewise establish, strengthen, and enforce, his laws and service with civil sanctions, as the Church doth it with ecclesiastical, or spiritual. The Church, when it was first planted by Christ, and propagated by his apostles, subsisted, as we know, and increased for near 300 years together without the assistance of the civil powers, which were generally so far from shewing it any favour, that they endeavoured all they could to extirpate and root it up. And at this day, in many places where the civil magistrates are all Mahometans or Heathens, the Church still stands upon its own legs, by virtue of that power which it receives from Christ the head of it: who hath promised that “the gates of hell shall never prevail against it⁹.” He, to whom all things are present, knew, that, seeing no man can be saved but by him, nor by him without being a member of his body the Church, therefore all the powers of hell would set themselves against his Church, and stir up those upon earth also to oppose, and, if it were possible, to destroy it. But still it hath not only kept its ground, but got more; and will do so to the end of the world, notwithstanding all the opposition that men or devils can make against it: and all by means of that power which it hath within itself, to make laws and constitutions for the defence and government of itself, and for the better keeping up the true faith, and fear, and worship

⁹ Matt. xvi. 18.

of God, and that obedience which is due to his laws entrusted with her; and to punish such as obstinately refuse to obey them, by casting them out of her society, and so cutting them off as rotten members from the body of Christ, and to receive them in again upon their hearty repentance and promise of amendment.

But although the Church be thus a distinct body of itself, under Christ the head, yet he being the head likewise "over all things to the Church¹," hath so ordered it, that many whole kingdoms have received his faith, and therefore taken his Church under their protection. In all which kingdoms the Church is of the same extent with the nation itself, established by its laws, and so made a national Church, under the same king by whom the whole nation is governed; who is supreme head upon earth of that particular Church, under Christ the head of all the Churches in the world: which taken all together make up that which we call the Catholic, or Universal Church.

Now, where a national Church is thus established, not only they who first established it, but all they also who make, or advise laws, whereby she may more freely and effectually administer the means of salvation, and exercise the power which Christ hath given her for that purpose, they also serve the Lord in it, not only by owning his authority, and defending his Church in general, but likewise because he will be thereby better served and worshipped all the kingdom over, than otherwise he would be, and will have more saints and servants there, who may be meet to live with him and praise him for ever.

Yea, by this means, the whole kingdom serves the Lord; for when his public service is established by the laws of the kingdom, and all the people in it are required to serve him accordingly, though there may, perhaps, be many particular persons who refuse or neglect it, that is only their personal fault, not the fault of the kingdom; which, as the kingdom, acts

¹ Eph. i. 22.

only by its laws. And if they require all the subjects to perform such worship and service to Almighty God, as his Church, upon mature deliberation, hath established and determined to be agreeable to his will, for the honour of his name, and the edification of his people, the whole kingdom, as such, performs it. And, therefore, all such as make or advise such laws, howsoever they may fail in other things, in that they plainly serve the Lord.

And so they do, likewise, by enforcing, with civil sanctions, the observation of any particular law of God; which is commonly broken, or neglected, by such who, having "their consciences seared with a hot iron," have not so much sense of God, or their duty to him, as to regard the laws and censures of the Church. As, for example, God hath strictly forbidden all men to take his sacred name in vain, to curse, or to swear falsely by it. Now, when any sort of people in a kingdom are come to such an height of impiety, as to live in the constant breach of so plain divine laws, if there be a law made for the restraining of them from it by temporal penalties, which they are more sensible of than they are of spiritual; though some of them may, perhaps, notwithstanding such a law, continue in any of these horrid sins, yet it will not be imputed to the kingdom itself as a national sin, because it hath sufficiently declared its abhorrence of it, and done what it could to suppress it. And all that have any hand in drawing up such a law against profane swearing and cursing, do not only serve the kingdom, but God himself by it, in taking so much care that his holy name may not be profaned, nor his laws slighted.

I need not instance in more particulars, where a word is enough. But I cannot but here call to mind what excellent laws have been made in this happy kingdom; therefore, happy, because such excellent laws have been made in it, that if they were but as generally observed as they were piously made, this would certainly be the most glorious kingdom upon earth. But, to our shame and grief be it spoken,

many of our laws are neglected as much as if they had been repealed, and but very few kept as they ought in duty and conscience to be. I had rather pour in oil, than rake in sores, especially those of a kingdom: but I cannot forbear taking notice how, notwithstanding all our laws to the contrary, we have now many heathens among us, people that were never baptized, or made Christians; and the worst of it is, that we are oft at a loss to know whether they be so or no. Of those who are christened, few are instructed in the principles of the Christian religion, because their parents refuse to send them while they are young, and they, themselves, afterwards, think scorn to come. The great badge of our religion—the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper—is so shamefully laid aside, that a great part of the kingdom never receive it at all, and very few as often as the law requires. There are many about the city, as well as in the country, that never go to church all the year, especially in great parishes, where they have not churches enough to go to, and so “live as without God in the world.” I dread to speak it, but I cannot help it, there are some, I hope not many among us, who are given up to such ‘hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word,’ that they openly reject it; and others, near akin to them, who have the confidence to deny and oppose the divine power or Godhead of our ever-blessed Redeemer, and so strike at the foundation of the Christian, and all true religion; and that, too, not only in their private discourse, but publicly in print.

These are some of the grievances, which, though I know not how to redress, yet, as a minister of Christ, I could not but mention; heartily wishing that all they who are intrusted with it would serve the Lord as faithfully in executing the laws, as they did who advised and made them; we should then see another face both in Church and State. But, for that purpose, they must first keep the laws themselves, and so set the rest of the nation an example how to do it. And then they would do well to consider, that the best laws

signify nothing, unless they be observed: and that all those who by their oath and place are bound to put the laws in execution, such especially as are made for the honour of God, unless they do it, they do not only fail in their duty to the king and their country, but to God himself; and contract unto themselves the guilt of all the impieties and immoralities which are committed by their default and neglect, so as to make themselves obnoxious to the displeasure of God, and to all the punishments which he hath threatened in that case. We know what old Eli suffered for not restraining the vices and debaucheries of his two sons, when it was in his power to do it; and all, because of the dishonour which was thereby cast upon the worship and service of God; who, therefore, in the message he sent him, told him plainly, "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed²." From whence we may likewise observe, that he looks upon the contempt that is thrown upon his laws and service, as affecting himself, and, therefore, will accordingly punish it: and that all who faithfully use the power committed to them for the suppressing of profaneness, and the promoting of piety and religion, they thereby perform the duty here required of them; they serve the Lord, for they honour him, and are accordingly honoured and rewarded by him.

And who would not serve so great a Lord?—the greatest in the whole world, the Lord of heaven and earth, the Lord our Maker, the Lord our Saviour, the Lord and Judge both of quick and dead, before whom all mankind must, ere long, give account how they have served him in their several generations, and whether they have done it or not. Happy are they who shall then be found to have served him with the talents which he put into their hands. Let us hear what he himself saith: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father

² 1 Sam. ii. 30.

honour³.” Where we have it from his own mouth, that they who serve him upon earth shall be and live with him in heaven, and shall be honoured by God the Father himself. And what an honour is this, to be honoured by Him that is the Fountain of all true honour! This honour have all the saints and servants of the Lord Christ, who also himself hath that respect for them, that, whilst other people are left to the general providence of God, he takes them into his own particular care, interceding continually with the Father for them; by which means they are not only kept in the favour of God, but have “the light of his countenance” always shining upon them, and all things concurring to make them happy both here and for ever.

³ John xii. 26.

SERMON IX.

CHRIST THE ONLY SAVIOUR.

Acts iv. 12.

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

WHEN it pleased Almighty God to create the world, and all things in it, he was pleased to do it by his Word: he said, “Let there be light: and there was light¹.” Thus the whole work was finished: as David observes, “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth²,” and St. Peter, “By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water³,” by that eternal Word, who, subsisting from all eternity in the form of God, at the beginning of time exerted his divine power in the production of all things out of nothing: for, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” This we are assured of by St. John, in the beginning of his gospel, where he also tells us soon after, “that this Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us⁴,” that is, he “took upon him the

¹ Gen. i. 3.

³ 2 Pet. iii. 5.

² Ps. xxxiii. 6.

⁴ John i. 14.

form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men⁵,” as St. Paul expresseth it, and then he was called Jesus, “the Saviour,” as being the only Saviour of men, whose form and nature he for that purpose had so assumed. So that we can now be saved only by him, by whom we were at first created. For that this Jesus, called also “the Christ,” is that Word of God by whom all things were made, appears not only from the gospel of St. John, before quoted, but likewise from the apostolical epistles, where it is said, that “God created all things by Jesus Christ⁶,” “whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds⁷.” And especially from that remarkable place, where the apostle, speaking of Jesus Christ, ascribes our redemption and creation to him both together; saying, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist⁸.” And that this glorious and Almighty Creator of all things is not only our Saviour, but the only Saviour that we have in all the world, is positively asserted by St. Peter in my text, where, speaking of Jesus Christ, he saith, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Which words are so plain, that I cannot but wonder how any, who profess to believe the Holy Scriptures, can doubt of the great truth revealed in them. And yet there have been, and still are, some who have the confidence to affirm that there are other ways besides Jesus Christ, whereby men may be saved: at least such as never heard of him, nor have had his gospel made known unto them,—they may, notwithstanding,

⁵ Phil. ii. 7.

⁷ Heb. i. 2.

⁶ Eph. iii. 9.

⁸ Col. i. 14—17.

be saved, as these people think, if they do but live up to the light and knowledge which they have, and according to the rules of that sect, or persuasion, they are of, be it what it will. But this is a great and dangerous mistake, if not one of those damnable heresies which St. Peter foretold should be privily brought into the church⁹. Be sure it is severely condemned by our Church in her Articles, where she hath declared herself against it in these words, 'They also are to be had accursed that presume to say, That every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he professteth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that Law, and the light of Nature. For holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved¹.'

In which Article there are two things much to be observed. The first is, that this is the only Article wherein the Church expressly denounceth a curse, or anathema. I say expressly, because it is said, 'They also are to be accursed,' and in the Latin, 'Sunt et illi anathematizandi;' where the particle 'et,' "also," seems to imply, that the curse is to be referred to all the foregoing Articles: so that whosoever contradict or oppose the doctrine established in any of them, as well as this, are to be also accursed. But, howsoever, this is the only Article of all the xxxix, in which the anathema is expressed; whereby our Church hath declared her utter abhorrence and detestation of the opinion she here condemns in a more particular manner, and hath taken special care that none of her members should be infected with it. For, having denounced this curse upon all that presumed to hold it, she afterwards required, and still doth, that all who are admitted to holy orders, or into any cure of souls, shall subscribe, and within two months after induction, publicly in the presence of God, and of the congregation, where they are to minister the word, declare their assent to this among her other Articles; and so to

⁹ 2 Pet. ii. 1.

¹ Article xviii.

their own curse, if they shall presume to say, either publicly or privately, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, if he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature: or, as it is expressed in the title of the Article, that eternal salvation may be obtained any other way than by the name of Christ. And whatsoever some may think, I am sure it is no light matter to fall under the curse of the whole Church of England in any thing, especially in this, wherein she doth no more than what the apostle in effect did before; where he saith, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha²”; that is, let him not only be Anathema, “accursed” in general, but let him be “accursed in the highest manner that can be;” let that curse come upon him, which in Syriac is called ܐܢܬܝܡܐ ܡܪܢܐ, Maran-atha, in Hebrew שְׁמַתָּה Shematha, by contraction, שְׁמַתָּה, Shammatta, “The Lord cometh;” whereby a man was utterly cast out of God’s Church, never to be restored, but wholly left to the judgment of the great day, when the Lord cometh to pass an irrevocable sentence upon all men. This is that curse which the apostle, by God’s own direction, here denounceth against all that love not the Lord Jesus Christ. But they who think that a man may be saved without him, can never have that love for him, which is due to the only Saviour of the world; and therefore are subject to this curse also. How they can stave it off I know not: let them look to that.

The other thing to be observed in the aforesaid Article of our Church is, that she grounds it upon the words of my text, giving this as the reason of it,—because Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved: not but that the same thing may be proved from many other places of Holy Scripture; but because this is so clear and full to the purpose, that he, who doth not wilfully shut his eyes, cannot but see it here. For

² 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

St. Peter and St. John having restored a lame man to his perfect health only by saying, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk;" and being afterwards examined by the rulers of the Jews, by what power they had done it, St. Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, tells them boldly, "That it was done in the name of Jesus Christ, whom they had crucified, and whom God had raised from the dead." And that this, this Jesus, is the stone the prophet speaks of, which was set at nought by these builders, which is now become "the head of the corner." And then he adds, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,"—"there is none other name," that is, there is no person, no way, no thing, that is or can be named under heaven, given or granted by Almighty God to men, whereby they must be saved, if they ever be at all, "but only the name of Jesus Christ."

In which words I do not see how any thing can be doubted of, except it be the true sense of the word "salvation," or what the apostle means here, by "being saved." For salvation is a word that hath various significations in Holy Scripture. Sometimes it is used for deliverance from temporal troubles; sometimes for safety and protection from them; sometimes for grace to eschew evil, and do good; sometimes for the remission of sins, and reconciliation unto God; sometimes for eternal life and happiness in the other world. Now the question is, in what sense the word is to be understood in my text? I answer, In all senses: all sorts of salvation are here signified by it; for the apostle here speaks indefinitely, There is no salvation in any other but in Christ; no name whereby we can be any way saved but his; he is the only Saviour of mankind in all respects. Whatsoever evil any of us are saved from, whatsoever good we enjoy, it must be wholly and solely ascribed to Jesus Christ; without whom we should never have received any favour or mercy at the hands of God, no more than the apostate angels do. They

are his creatures as well as we: but God never extended any mercy towards them, but hath reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day; because they never had a Saviour to save them from his wrath and just indignation against them. And our condition would have been every way as bad as theirs, if we had not had a Saviour, and such a Saviour as Jesus Christ, who is able to save us not only from temporal, but from spiritual and eternal miseries, and to advance us to the highest degree of glory and happiness in the other world; and therefore he is called “the captain of our salvation³,” and “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him⁴.” And in this sense especially it is, that the words of my text are to be understood, “There is no salvation,” there is no attaining everlasting happiness, but by Christ: “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we can be saved,” so as to enjoy the love and favour of God for ever.

But here we must observe, that when the apostle speaks of eternal salvation as attainable by Jesus Christ, he is not to be so understood, as if Christ brought any man to heaven *per saltum*, without first leading him in the way thither: for the salvation here spoken of begins in this life; Christ first saves us from our sins, both from the guilt and from the power of all manner of sins. He gives us repentance and faith, and grace to love, and serve, and honour God truly and faithfully in our generation: he applies the merits of his death to us, for the pardon of our sins, and that God may be reconciled to us: he makes us pure, and humble, and holy, every way meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; and then, and not till then, he brings us to it. So that the whole of our salvation, from first to last, is begun, continued, and perfected only by him; none of us being able to do any thing towards it to any purpose, much less

³ Heb. ii. 10.

⁴ Ib. v. 9.

attain the end of our faith, even the eternal salvation of our souls, without him.

He that really believes the words of my text, will need no other arguments to convince him of this great truth, so clearly revealed in them. Yet, howsoever, that we may be able to form a clear idea of it in our minds, and also be more firmly established in our belief of it, it may not be amiss to call to mind some of the many other arguments which may be produced for it. For which purpose we may first observe in general, that there are two things absolutely necessary to any man's attaining everlasting happiness, or salvation, in the other world. First, it is necessary that his mind be at least in some degree inclined to God, and disposed to virtue and goodness, so as to live, for the main, soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; for it is certain, that without "holiness no man shall see the Lord ⁵," nor, indeed, is capable of enjoying him, the chiefest good, in which all our happiness doth chiefly consist. And then it is necessary, also, that all the sins and failures that he hath been guilty of be pardoned, that so God may be reconciled to him, and accept of him as a righteous and a good man, fit to live with him, and to enjoy him for ever. For so long as God is angry and displeased with a man, it is impossible that man should be happy; as might easily be demonstrated. But I may well take these things for granted; they being so plain and evident at first sight, that there is no controversy or dispute among us about them.

Let us, therefore, now lay aside our prejudices, and impartially consider how far men can of themselves go in these ways that lead to salvation; and we shall find they cannot so much as make one true step towards them without Christ. For, first, men by nature, as it is now corrupted, have no true knowledge of God, nor yet of virtue and vice; what they ought, and what they ought not, to do in order to their being saved.

⁵ Heb. xii. 14.

I know there are some general notions of these things in all, or most men, but they are so weak and confused, that they have no influence at all upon their minds; and when they come to be applied to particular cases, they are generally mistaken, virtue for vice, and vice for virtue. As we see in the ancient inhabitants of America, before the Christians came among them; though they had some notions of a God among them, yet they knew nothing of him, who, or what he was; some taking one thing, others another for him, but none the right; neither did they perform any kind of religious worship to any thing, except it was to the sun, or the devil. And though they believed the immortality of the soul, that after death the virtuous lived in fine gardens, and the vicious in torments; yet they were so far from understanding the true nature of virtue and vice, that the most vicious wretches in the world were reckoned by them to be the most virtuous, even such as had taken most of their enemies captives, and had afterwards in cold blood killed and eaten them; as one (Johannes Lerus) who conversed a great while with those who lived upon the coast of Brazil assures us upon his own knowledge. Now, what could such people as these do towards their salvation? The more they lived according to their law, and the light of nature which they had, the worse they were. And so were anciently the greatest part of mankind, in Europe, Asia, and Africa, as well as in America; I may too truly say all, except those which lived near to that part of Asia where Christ all along had his Church and people, to whom he revealed the will of God, what he would, and what he would not, have them do: whereby the true knowledge of God, and of their duty to him, was constantly kept up among them, and in some measure was imparted by them to the people that lived about them, and frequently conversed with them; especially the Egyptians on the one hand, and the Phœnicians on the other; from whom the Greeks afterwards received it, as they did, by their own confession, their learning, and their very letters too, as

the Romans did from them: to which the Israelites' abode in Egypt for two hundred and fifteen years together, and their several captivities and dispersions afterwards, contributed very much; and they seem to be designed by God for this very purpose. For by this means some of God's own people being scattered among all the nations thereabouts, and often speaking, as doubtless they did, of the God they worshipped, and of the excellent laws which he had given them; others took occasion from thence to look a little more narrowly into these things, and, finding them very agreeable to something within themselves, which they had taken no notice of before, they began to think and talk a little more consistently about God, and also about good and evil, virtue and vice, than they had hitherto done. The natural notions of these things, which at first were implanted, but were now almost quite stifled in them, beginning by this means to revive a little, and shew forth themselves again; especially the Greeks first, and then the Latins, improved these hints so far, that some of them could discern pretty well between what they ought, and what they ought not, to do. But whatsoever knowledge they had of these things came either immediately, or else mediately from the Jews; and therefore we find very little, if any thing at all, of it till after the ten tribes were carried out of their own, and dispersed in other countries; nor in any places but those which were either so themselves, or else were frequented by persons that came from such places as were near to Judæa. For those which were furthest off from thence on all sides, as the north of Europe, the north and east of Asia, the south and west of Africa, and all America, were overspread with gross ignorance and barbarity; which to me seems plainly to argue, that all the knowledge which the ancient heathens had of religion and morality came first from the Jews, as theirs did from Christ, who, intending to be born into the world of their stock, in all ages sent prophets among them to instruct them in it: for that it was the Spirit of Christ

which was in the prophets, and by which they spake, is evident from many places of holy writ, and particularly from that of St. Peter, where he saith, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify⁶." From all which it appears, that mankind in general are so far from being able to attain salvation without Christ, that without him they had never so much as known any thing that was necessary to be done in order to it.

And if we cannot know, much less can we do, any such thing as we ought without him. I know some have highly extolled and magnified the powers and faculties of man, as if we were able to do great things of ourselves, when God knows that we are "not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves⁷." "But every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually⁸." And therefore they, who boast so much of their strength, do but betray their own weakness by it; as might be shewn in many respects: but it appears sufficiently in this,—that they take the height of man's power by nature, from that which they themselves have by Christ. For they living under the light of the Gospel, which hath always something of heat attending it, are able thereby to understand and do some things that seem to be very good. And from thence they conclude, that they, or any other, may do so by their own natural strength without Christ. Which is not only a great mistake, but an horrid abuse of the grace which Christ hath given them: for he gave it that they might serve and honour him with it; whereas they employ it against him, by making themselves, and others, if they could, believe that they are not beholden unto him for it.

But if they would give us a true description of men's natural strength to avoid evil, or do good, they should

⁶ 1 Pet. i. 10, 11.

⁷ 2 Cor. iii. 5.

⁸ Gen. vi. 5.

go into those parts of Africa, or America, where men never yet heard either of God's law or gospel; or else have quite forgotten it, and therefore live in the true state of nature. Or, if they be loth to travel so far, let them but read the many impartial relations that have been made of those parts when they were first discovered; and then let them tell us what mighty things men can do by their own natural powers. They will find many of those people as ingenious and cunning as themselves; but it is only to do mischief, to destroy and devour one another, which they reckon to be a great virtue: but whether it be or no, I leave it to our Socinian and Pelagian philosophers to dispute the case with them.

But they will say, perhaps, although these were such brutish and savage people, that there was no shadow of any true virtue among them; yet there have been other heathens, as the Platonists, the Peripatetics, and several of the old philosophers, who have discoursed very well of religion and virtue. It is true, they did so. But, as I have shewn already, they received the first intimations of these things from Christ himself, by his people, the Jews, which lived near them, and some among them; otherwise, I doubt not but they would have been as much in the dark about such things as the Tartarians, Africans, and Americans, are at this day. And, besides, all their discourses of this nature were confined to some particular virtues, which were most obvious and apparent to men, with the total neglect, if not contempt, of such as had an immediate respect to the true God, and of many others that were as necessary to qualify a man for heaven. And these they did talk of,—they only talked of them: we do not find that any ever practised them all, nor indeed any one of them, so as that it might be truly termed a virtue⁹. But after all their talk, their very virtues, as they managed them, were but as so many vices; and the good works they seemed to do were done so

⁹ Rom. i. 21.

ill, that they were neither pleasing unto God, nor any way profitable to their own salvation; but rather have the nature of sin, as our Church hath declared of all manner of works, done by any person whatsoever, without, or before, the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Holy Spirit¹.

And, verily, whatsoever proud and groundless conceits some men have of their own gifts, and parts, and power to do good, I am sure they have none without Christ. For Christ himself hath told us so, saying, with his own mouth, "Without me ye can do nothing²;" and by his Holy Spirit, saying, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God³?" From whence it is as plain as words can make it, that neither Pagan, nor Jew, nor Turk, nor Christian, no person whatsoever, can overcome the world, so as to live soberly, righteously, and godly in it, but only by Jesus Christ; nor by him neither, unless he believe him to be the Son of God in that sense wherein he is declared to be so in the Holy Scriptures, even of the same nature or substance with the Father; which St. Paul was so sensible of, that he ascribes all the ability he had of doing any thing that was truly good and virtuous wholly to Christ, saying, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me⁴." From which, and many such-like places of Holy Scripture which might be produced, we may infallibly conclude that there is none other name given among men, whereby they can do any thing towards their salvation, but the name of Christ.

But what if it were possible—as it is not—for a man to do some good works by his own strength without Christ; doth it thence follow, that he can be saved without him? By no means. For whatsoever good works a man may be supposed to do, it must be granted that he doth, or hath done, some that are really ill and sinful. This all must acknowledge, that

¹ Article XIII.

³ 1 John v. 5.

² John xv. 5.

⁴ Phil. iv. 13.

believe either God's word, or their own experience. But how, then, shall a man be freed from the guilt he hath contracted, and from the punishments he hath deserved, by his sins? Can he be freed by the good works he is supposed to have done? No, surely. When he hath done all he can, he is still but an unprofitable servant; he hath done no more than what was his duty to do, and, therefore, cannot possibly merit any thing at all by it, much less so great a favour, as to have his sins pardoned, and so his obligations to punishment for them cancelled and made void. Neither hath he any ground to expect such a mercy at the hands of God without Christ: for we do not find that God was ever merciful to any of his creatures, but only to those for which Christ died; and, therefore, may be certain that his mercy in the pardon of men's sins is never shewn, but only for the sake, and upon the account of, that death whereby Christ made complete satisfaction to his truth and justice for them.

But this is a point that deserves to be a little more cleared; for which end, I shall not insist upon God's vindictive justice, or whether he can in justice pardon any sins, without having satisfaction made unto him for them. For justice, as it is in God, being an infinite perfection, we are not so well able to comprehend it: neither is it the question, Whether God can do it, if he will? but, Whether he will do it, though he can? And, therefore, I shall rather, at present, choose to explain this great doctrine by God's veracity, or faithfulness to his word. For all agree that he cannot lie; but whatsoever he saith shall be, shall certainly be as he saith it: so that his word must always stand, and be made good. Now if we consult his holy word, wherein he hath revealed his divine will and pleasure to us, we shall find that he hath often said, that all who transgress his laws shall be punished for it. One of the first things he said to man was, that in the day he eat of the forbidden fruit he should surely die⁵. Whereby he plainly signified it to be his will,

⁵ Gen. ii. 17.

that every sin should be punished with death. And he hath frequently repeated the same in other terms by his prophets. But, at present, I shall mention only his saying, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them⁶." They who are cursed by God are, *ipso facto*, under his displeasure, and condemned to die, and suffer all the punishments that he can inflict upon them. But here we see that every one that doth not do every thing which he hath commanded is thus cursed by God himself. And, "it being impossible for God to lie⁷," it is likewise impossible but this curse should take effect, and be executed upon all mankind, because all have sinned and are guilty before God; and are, therefore, in express terms, cursed by him.

Now, how is it possible for any of us ever to avoid this curse, or have it taken off from us? No way, certainly, but by Christ; nor by him, unless he hath borne it for us. But, as the apostle there saith, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree⁸." Christ, the eternal Son of God, having taken upon him the whole nature of man, and so sustaining the person of every one that is of that nature; he, in it, "by the grace of God tasted death for every man⁹," even the cursed death of the cross: and so was made a curse for us, or in our stead, suffering that curse in our nature, which we must otherwise have suffered every man in his own person; "whereby," as the apostle here saith, "he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law:" for, by this means the curse, which was denounced in the law against all the transgressors of it, was executed upon us all in our common Head and Representative, and in our very nature, too, united to a divine Person: so that God's word is now fulfilled and satisfied; and he may freely, without any violation of his word, remit that curse which he had threatened against us, and,

⁶ Gal. iii. 10. Deut. xxvii. 26.

⁸ Gal. iii. 13.

⁷ Heb. vi. 18.

⁹ Heb. ii. 9.

instead thereof, confer all manner of blessings upon us for his Son's sake, in whom, and in whom alone, he himself hath also said that "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed¹." By him, therefore, we may be saved from all the curses of the law, notwithstanding that God himself hath threatened them. But we never heard of, nor can imagine, any other way whereby it is possible to be done, without plain contradiction to the word of God; and, therefore, may conclude that, as God's word is true, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, but only the name Jesus Christ."

But, to put the whole matter out of dispute, let us briefly consider St. Paul's case, both as he was a Jew, and as he was a Christian; as he was out of Christ, and as he was in him. As a Jew, he was born and bred in that religion which God himself had revealed and settled in the world. He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the most eminent Rabbies the Jews ever had². He was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was as zealous towards God as any man³. He lived after the strictest sect in that religion, a Pharisee⁴. He profited in the Jews' religion above many of his equals in his own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers⁵. He could truly say, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day⁶." He could and did assert, when inspired by God himself, that he had more ground to trust in the flesh, or Jewish religion, than any other: "If any other man," saith he, "thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless⁷." Where shall we find a man out of Christ, that

¹ Gen. xii. 3; xviii. 18; xxii. 18.

² Acts xxii. 3.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Acts xxvi. 5.

⁵ Gal. i. 14.

⁶ Acts xxiii. 1.

⁷ Phil. iii. 4—6.

ever went farther than this in religion and morality? No where certainly upon the face of the earth: and yet this was St. Paul's case in the Jewish religion. And if any mortal man could have been saved without Christ, it cannot be doubted but he might; and so, questionless, he himself thought so long as he continued in that religion. But did he think so afterwards, when he was enlightened, and directed by God's Holy Spirit what to think and say? So far from that, that he had no sooner said these great things of himself, but he immediately adds, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith⁸." Where we see how, notwithstanding the great advantages he had, and the extraordinary proficiencies he had made in the Jewish religion, he slightes them all as nothing worth, nor contributing any thing at all towards his justification without Christ: no, not although, as touching the righteousness which is in the law,—the whole Mosaic law, both moral and ceremonial,—he was blameless. As he saith in another place, "I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified⁹." Though he was not conscious to himself of any one wilful sin, yet he doth not look upon himself as thereby justified; nay, he positively saith he was not. And therefore he here most earnestly desires, above all things in the world, to be found in Christ, "not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." And if this be not another righteousness from that which is of the law; if it be not the righteousness of God himself, and not of a

⁸ Phil. iii. 7—9.

⁹ 1 Cor. iv. 4.

mere man; if it be not made ours by faith in Christ; if it be not the only righteousness whereby we can be justified, or accounted righteous before God, according to the doctrine of our Church; and, by consequence, if there be any other way whereby it is possible for us to be justified, or saved, but only by Jesus Christ; I do not see what sense can be put upon the words, without wresting them to our own destruction.

And, indeed, if they who presume to affirm, and that, too, from Holy Scripture, that a man may be saved in any religion, without faith in Christ, if they do not wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction, for my part I know not who can. For there is no heresy can be more destructive to men's souls, or more repugnant to the whole design of the Gospel, than this is: for, to what purpose did Jesus Christ come into the world to save sinners¹⁰, if sinners could be saved without him? To what purpose did God give his Son, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life¹," if any man may have everlasting life without believing in him? To what purpose did he give himself a ransom for all², if there be any that have no occasion for it? To what purpose was he delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification³, if we could be justified from our offences, whether he had been ever raised again or no? To what purpose did he require "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations⁴," if people of any nation might repent and be pardoned by any other name as well as his? To what purpose doth he now appear in the presence of God, and there make intercession for us⁵, if our salvation doth not depend upon it? To what purpose was the Gospel written? Was it not, "that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, we might have life through his name⁶?" Doth not Christ himself say, "As the branch cannot

¹⁰ 1 Tim. i. 15.¹ John iii. 16.² 1 Tim. ii. 6.³ Rom. iv. 25.⁴ Luke xxiv. 47.⁵ Heb. ix. 24.⁶ John xx. 13.

bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me⁷?" Doth not he say, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me⁸?" Doth not he say, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God⁹?" Doth not he say, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned¹?" What can be the meaning of these, and many such expressions scattered all over the Bible, if there be any other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Christ?

And yet, it is strange, there are some who would wrest the Scriptures so far, as to make them prove the contrary, too; especially that place, where St. Peter saith, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him²." But this serves only to shew that, when men have espoused an error, they will catch at any text to maintain it by itself, without considering the context and design of the place. If they had done that, they would have seen that this is so far from supporting, that it quite overthrows, their opinion. The case, in short, is this: St. Peter being admonished by a vision to go to Cornelius, though a Gentile; he being sent for, accordingly went: being come to him, Cornelius tells him, "That he was commanded by an angel to send for him, to know of him what he ought to do." "Now therefore," saith he, "are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." St. Peter, hearing this, opened his mouth and said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons;" that is, I see now that the Gentiles must be brought into the Church of Christ, as well as the Jews: and then adds, "But in every nation he that feareth God,

⁷ John xv. 4.⁸ Ib. xiv. 6.⁹ Ib. iii. 18.¹ Mark xvi. 16.² Acts x. 34, 35.

and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." He doth not say, such a one shall be thereby saved, but only that he is accepted with God, so as that he may be admitted into the Church of Christ, to be saved by him. Cornelius was doubtless as devout a Gentile as ever lived; yet it seems he could not be saved without the knowledge of Christ: if he could, what need all this stir about it? Why must an angel be sent to him, and St. Peter warned by a vision, and by the Spirit, to go to him, and all to get him into the Church of Christ, if after all he might have been saved as well without it? Certainly, if there was no other in all the Bible, this one place is sufficient of itself to demonstrate that no man ever was, or can be, saved without Christ, how devout or pious soever he may seem to be.

But is it not a sad thing, say they, that so many millions of people, who never heard of Christ, should be damned, notwithstanding they live according to the law and light they have? I answer; Was it not a sadder thing, that the whole world should be destroyed, men, women, and children, too, that never committed any actual sin, that all should be swept away with the flood, but only eight persons that were saved in the ark, the type of the Church of Christ? Is it not a much sadder thing, that the innumerable company of angels that kept not their first estate should be all reserved in everlasting chains for the judgment of the great day, and not so much as any one saved? Is it not the saddest thing of all, that men should talk at this rate against their Saviour, that he might have spared all his pains, for they could have been saved well enough without him, or ever hearing of him? Is this the recompence we give him for all his love and kindness to us? "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour³?" May not God do what he will

³ Rom. ix. 20, 21.

with his own? Is it not enough for us that he hath made known the way of salvation unto us; but we must needs be quarrelling, that others may not be saved as well as we? If he hath a mind to save any man, he can bring him, as he did Cornelius, to the knowledge of our Saviour when he pleaseth; yea, he can send the light of the Gospel into all the corners of the earth whensoever he sees good, and we have ground to hope that he will ere long.

In the mean while let us, therefore, all take heed lest we neglect so great salvation, which is revealed and offered to us by Jesus Christ. Let us look upon him as our only Saviour, and believe and trust in him only for all things necessary to our salvation; not only for the pardon of our sins, and to bring us to heaven when we die, but to lead us in the way thither all the while we live: "To open our eyes, and to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that we may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in him⁴." For which purpose we must be constant, hearty, and sincere, in the use of all the means which he hath appointed for our obtaining grace and salvation by him. We must pray without ceasing, both in public and private. We must read and hear his most holy word, that we may know what he would have us to believe and do; and strive all we can, by his assistance, to believe and do accordingly. We must let slip no opportunities we can get of receiving that blessed Sacrament which he ordained in memory of that great Sacrifice which he offered for the sins of the world, and for ours among the rest. And in the use of all these means we must keep our faith always fixed upon him, to make them effectual, "that we may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ⁵," "still pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in him⁶."

⁴ Acts xxvi. 18.

⁵ 2 Pet. iii. 18.

⁶ Phil. iii. 14.

These things all must do, that design in good earnest to be saved by Christ. But as for those whom he sends to administer his word and sacraments, for the salvation of other men, they must likewise do all they can to make him known in the world; and especially to those whom he hath for that purpose committed to their care. His great apostle determined to know nothing among the Corinthians but "Jesus Christ, and him crucified⁷." And the same necessity is laid upon us, too, and woe to us if we preach not the gospel⁸, if we preach not the gospel of Jesus Christ, that people may know him, and the divinity of his Person, the mystery of his incarnation, the perfect innocency and holiness of his life, the infinite merits of his death, the power of his resurrection, his glorious ascension and exaltation at the right hand of God, and the continual intercession which he there makes for us. For unless people know these and the like fundamental articles of our faith, as they are revealed to us in the gospel of Christ, they can never apply themselves to him, nor believe as they ought in him for their salvation; and so will perish everlastingly through our default, for which we must answer severely another day. For when we have preached and they have done all they can, it is only by Jesus Christ they can ever be saved.

But by him, blessed be God for it, we may be all saved: as we have no other, we need no other Saviour besides him; "For he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them⁹." He saves none but those who come to God by him; but he is able to save them to the uttermost, so as to do every thing for them, and in them, that can be any way requisite to his saving them, all of them, how many soever they be, and how much soever is to be done for them, that they may be saved; for he is almighty to save. And, therefore, if any be not saved, it is not for want of power in him, but the fault is wholly in them-

⁷ 1 Cor. ii. 2.⁸ 1 Cor. ix. 16.⁹ Heb. vii. 25.

selves; they will not come to God by him; they will not mind their salvation at all; or they will look for it some other way; or else they will not trust wholly unto him for it: and then it is no wonder they go without it.

But let others do what they will, and save themselves if they can; let us adore and praise the most High God our Maker, that he himself hath been pleased to become our Saviour too; yea, our very salvation¹⁰. So the prophet calls him, "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him¹." And again, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation²." Moses and David had both sung the same thing before in the same words³. And they all agree in saying, "He is become my salvation," or "for salvation unto me;" to shew that he is not our salvation, as he is strength and perfection in his own nature, but in ours, which he took upon him, and so became salvation to us. Which is such an unspeakable, such an inestimable expression of his divine love and goodness, that we can never sufficiently extol and admire it as we ought; and, therefore, should be always doing it as well as we can, by ascribing the glory of our salvation entirely unto God, rejoicing in him, trusting on him, and giving thanks continually unto him, and unto him alone for it; singing, with the blessed Virgin, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour⁴." And with the Psalmist, "My soul shall be joyful in the Lord: it shall rejoice in his salvation⁵." "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid⁶?" "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of

¹⁰ Luke ii. 30.¹ Isa. lxii. 11.² Ib. xii. 2.³ Exod. xv. 2. Ps. cxviii. 14.⁴ Luke i. 46, 47.⁵ Ps. xxxv. 9.⁶ Ib. xxvii. 1.

our salvation⁷." "Sing unto the Lord; bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day⁸."

Thus we find David and the prophets all along acknowledging that "salvation is of the Lord⁹." "That he is the God of our salvation¹," &c. "That we are saved only by the Lord our God²." And, therefore, unto him only they always prayed for salvation, saying, הושיענו, "Save us, O God of our salvation³," and הושיעה נא, "Save us now, we beseech thee, O Lord⁴." Hence it was, that when the Jews would give the greatest glory they could to God, as they sometimes sung Hallelujah, at other times they cried out, "Hosannah, save us, we beseech thee;" as reckoning that when they attributed their salvation wholly unto God, and prayed to him only for it, they praised him as effectually as when they did it in express terms: especially in the Feast of Tabernacles this was done so often, that the Feast itself was from hence called הושענא רבא, "The Great Hosannah." And it is very observable that, when our blessed Saviour was coming to Jerusalem, a little before the passover, the people cut down branches from the trees, as they did at the Feast of Tabernacles, and used the same acclamations also unto him, saying, "Hosannah to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosannah in the highest⁵." As if they had said, "Say ye, Hosannah, Save us now, to the Son of David;" which I cannot but look upon as by the special providence of God. For though but few, if any of them designed it, yet they hereby applied their Hosannahs to their proper object, to God our Saviour, who was then in the midst of them, crying, Hosannah, "Save us now," unto him who alone could do it; and so ascribing unto him all the praise and glory of that salvation which they so earnestly expect and desire from God.

⁷ Ps. xcv. 1.

⁸ Ib. xcvi. 2.

⁹ Jonah ii. 9. Ps. iii. 8.

¹ Ps. xxiv. 5.

² Hos. i. 7.

³ 1 Chron. xvi. 35. Ps. cvi. 47.

⁴ Ps. cxviii. 25.

⁵ Matt. xxi. 9.

But we certainly have as much reason as they had to sing Hosannah to the Son of David, to laud and magnify the eternal God our Saviour, by ascribing our salvation wholly unto him. For this is the way, as we find in the Revelation, which the Church triumphant in heaven also useth in praising of him ; and therefore we of the Church militant here on earth may well join with them in singing “Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God⁶.” And again, “Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb⁷,” for ever and ever.

⁶ Rev. xix. 1.

⁷ Ib. vii. 10.

SERMON X.

CHRIST THE SOLE AUTHOR OF GRACE AND TRUTH.

JOHN i. 17.

“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

THERE is a great dispute among expositors, whether these words were first written by St. John the Evangelist, or spoken first by St. John the Baptist, as they a little before were. But this is, like most other disputes, frivolous and unnecessary: for it is no matter who spoke or wrote them, so long as we are sure they are the words of the Holy Ghost, who was pleased not only to dictate, but to cause them also to be recorded, that mankind might always know by whom grace and truth came into the world; a thing so necessary to be known, that our eternal salvation depends upon it: for it is only by grace and truth that we can be saved; but unless we know how, and by whom, it came, we can never know how to come at it, so as to be saved by it. And, therefore, the Holy Spirit of God, of his infinite mercy, hath been pleased to acquaint us with it, saying, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

For the understanding of which divine sentence, we must first observe, in general, that what we here translate “grace and truth,” is the same that so often

occurs in the Old Testament under the names of **אֱמֶת** and **חֶסֶד**, the latter of which is always translated "truth," or "faithfulness;" the other, **חֶסֶד**, we commonly, following the LXX, translate "mercy," sometimes "goodness," sometimes "lovingkindness," or the like; but it most properly signifies that which we call "grace," "favour," or "kindness," especially to one that doth not deserve it, and can no way requite it. In this sense these two words are frequently put together, none more in all the Old Testament. The first time we meet with them together, is where Abraham's servant being sent to fetch a wife for his master's son, and finding his journey prosperous, he said, "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth¹." Afterwards he said to Laban and Bethuel, "If ye will deal kindly and truly with my master²." In the original it is, "If ye will deal kindness," or "mercy and truth;" the same words that were used before. The same phrase is used also by Jacob to Joseph³; and by the two spies to Rahab⁴; and David said to Ittai, "Mercy and truth be with thee⁵:" which is the same, in effect, as if he had said, The Lord be with thee; or, as he himself had before said to the men of Jabesh-Gilead, "The Lord shew mercy and truth to you⁶;" that is, the Lord preserve you and save you; for it is to these two things that our preservation and salvation are ascribed. "Let thy lovingkindness," saith he, or, "thy mercy and thy truth continually preserve me⁷." "O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him⁸." "Mercy and truth preserve the king," saith Solomon⁹. And David again, "He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God¹⁰." "For by mercy and truth iniquity is purged¹¹."

¹ Gen. xxiv. 27.² Ver. 49.³ Gen. xlvii. 29.⁴ Josh. ii. 14.⁵ 2 Sam. xv. 20.⁶ Ib. ii. 6.⁷ Ps. xl. 11.⁸ Ib. lxi. 7.⁹ Prov. xx. 28.¹⁰ Ps. xcvi. 3.¹¹ Prov. xvi. 6. Ps. lxxxv. 9, 10; xl. 10. Prov. iii. 3; xiv. 22.

Hence it is that David so often praiseth God particularly for these two divine properties together; "I will praise thy name for thy lovingkindness, and for thy truth¹." "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake²." "For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds³." Thus he praiseth God also⁴; and, to sum up all in few words, he saith, "All the paths of the Lord," that is, all his dealings with them, "are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies⁵."

From all which it appears, that the Church hath all along, from Abraham's time, been used to speak of these two properties together; neither can it be imagined that Abraham's servant first began it, but that he learnt it of his master, and he from his ancestors, as they had received it from Adam, when God first promised mercy to mankind: for the promise being made by God himself, his faithful people could not but believe in the truth of it, and, therefore, constantly used this form of speech, "Mercy and truth," to testify their faith in, and their thankfulness for, the said promise, notwithstanding their unworthiness of it; which they could not but acknowledge, as Jacob did, saying to God, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth;" or, as it is in the original, "I am less than all the mercies, and all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant⁶."

But that which is chiefly to be observed in our present case, is, that when Moses desired to see the glory of God, saying to him, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory;" God said, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee⁷." And soon after, "the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in

¹ Ps. cxxxviii. 2.

² Ib. cxv. 1.

³ Ib. lvii. 10; xxxvi. 5; cviii. 4.

⁴ Ib. lvii. 3; lxxxix. 1, 2. 14; c. 5; cxvii. 2.

⁵ Ib. xxv. 10. ⁶ Gen. xxxii. 10. ⁷ Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19.

goodness and truth⁸;" or, as we elsewhere translate the same words, "Plenteous in," or, "full of, mercy and truth⁹," which will give great light to the words a little before my text, and they to my text itself; "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth¹." The evangelist is here speaking of the Word, by which all things were made². And he here saith, the same "Word was made flesh," or, as we say, incarnate, καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, "and dwelt among us," in our nature, and so among us: "And we," saith St. John, "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of," or "from, the Father;" such glory as became the only-begotten Son of God. This glory St. John, with two other disciples, saw at our Lord's transfiguration upon the mount, when "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light;" and there came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased³." Then, as another of them saith, they "were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory⁴," &c. So that what Moses desired to see upon one mount, these three disciples saw upon another, even "the glory of God:" and what God there proclaimed of himself, is here proclaimed by his Spirit, of him whose glory the disciples saw, which is itself also his greatest glory, even, that he is "full of grace and truth;" or, which is the same, of goodness, or of mercy and truth: which great glory is here asserted of him, as he is the "Word made flesh," God and man in one person; as such, he is full of grace and truth. And then it follows in the next verse but one, "And of his fulness have all we received⁵," not only we who saw his glory upon the mount, but all of us receive of his fulness: "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell⁶." And how much soever we receive

⁸ Exod. xxxiv. 6.⁹ Ps. lxxxvi. 15.¹ John i. 14.² Ver. 1, 2.³ Matt. xvii. 2. 5.⁴ 2 Pet. i. 16, 17.⁵ John i. 16.⁶ Col. i. 19.

of his fulness, his fulness is still the same; as the sun loseth nothing by our receiving light and heat from it. But that which is here more particularly spoken of, is his fulness of grace and truth; and, therefore, when the evangelist had said, of this "fulness have we all received," he adds, "and grace for grace;" that is, grace in us for that which is in him, or, which he is full of: and, by consequence, all manner of grace, or favour, or mercy, that we can possibly stand in need of; for it is all fully in him, and it is of his fulness that we receive it. He doth not add, "and truth for truth;" for though Christ be as full of truth as he is of grace, yet that is only in him, and is not communicated, but only manifested to us; and we cannot properly be said to receive, but to believe it: and it is by our believing his truth, that we receive of the fulness of his grace. And we cannot receive the one, without believing the other: for which reason they are so frequently put together not only here, but, as I have shewn, all along in the Old Testament.

Now my text is brought in as a proof of what thus went before. It was before said, that the "Word made flesh," was "full of grace and truth," and that "of his fulness we have all received." Now to prove this, it is here added, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." For if grace and truth came by him, it is of him only that we can receive it.

But here we may observe, first, That this is the first place wherein Jesus Christ is expressly named by this evangelist; before this, he had all along called him "The Word;" but that we may know whom he means by the Word, he here plainly calls him Jesus Christ. Again, we may here observe how much he prefers Jesus before Moses. Moses was hitherto accounted by the Jews the greatest person that ever lived upon earth; none being, in their esteem, comparable to him. But here we see one preferred far before him: for only the law was given by Moses, the law of commandments and ordinances; no grace to

enable us to obey that law, nor mercy to any that transgressed it: nor so much as any promise of such grace of mercy, upon the truth of which we could depend for it. But both “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” as certainly as the law was given by Moses.

And it is very observable, also, that the law is here said to be given by Moses; but it is not said that grace and truth was *given*, but that it *came* by Jesus Christ, ἐγένετο, it “was made” by him: the same word that is used a little before, where it is said, πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, “All things were made by him⁷.” As all things else, so grace and truth was made, had its very being and existence by him; so that without him there would have been no such thing as either “grace” or “truth” ever heard of in the world. Which is far more than what is said of Moses in respect of the law: for the law was only given by him as a servant, or minister, sent from God to deliver his will to mankind; “but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” as the author and founder of it. And, therefore, as the apostle argues, “This man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant; But Christ as a son over his own house⁸.” Though the law was given by Moses, it was not his own, but the law of God; whereas both grace and truth is Christ’s own; he himself is full of it in himself; and it is from him that it flows to us, as from its spring or fountain: for, as it is here expressly said, “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

It came by Jesus Christ at its first coming into the world, and in all ages since; whatsoever grace and truth ever came into the world, it came by him: but there hath been grace and truth in the world, from the beginning of it; and therefore Jesus Christ, by whom it came, must needs have been from the beginning too.

⁷ John i. 3.

⁸ Heb. iii. 3. 5, 6.

Which I note, by the way, against the Socinians; against whom the whole stream of Holy Scriptures runs so full, that I cannot but wonder what their heads, or rather what their hearts, are made of, that they can or dare stand against it.

These things being premised concerning the words in general, we shall now consider them more particularly, and shew how both “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;” which is one of the most noble and divine, as well as the most comfortable subjects that we can ever exercise our thoughts upon: for it contains the sum and substance of the whole gospel, as it is distinguished from the law; the gospel being nothing else but the glad tidings of grace and truth to mankind. And, therefore, when the evangelist would shew us how both the law and the gospel came into the world, he expresseth it in these terms, “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

But first grace, and then truth: grace is first, not in respect of time, but in order and the nature of the thing; for they both came together into the world at first, and they always go together still: but grace made way, as it were, for the truth here spoken of to come; and truth therefore came, because grace did so: which, therefore, is placed first, and must accordingly be first considered.

What we are to understand by “grace” in this place, may be gathered from what we have already discoursed concerning the word so often joined together with “truth” in the Old Testament; even “the free, undeserved favour, kindness, or mercy, of God, howsoever shewed, or expressed, to mankind.” And so the word χάρις, “grace,” is generally used in the New Testament; and opposed to any thing that we can deserve by the works which we ourselves do. “For to him that worketh,” saith the apostle, “is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt⁹.” And,

⁹ Rom. iv. 4.

speaking of the election of grace, he saith, "If by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work¹." And in my text "grace," as well as "truth," is opposed to the whole law, and so to all the works of it: and, therefore, it must needs here signify "whatsoever favour God is pleased to shew us, or to do for us; which we, by our own works, do no way deserve or merit at his hands." And seeing we cannot possibly of ourselves deserve any at all, therefore, whatsoever we have must come from his free grace and good-will to us. This is that grace which is here said to come by Jesus Christ; even all the favour that God is pleased to have, or do, for any man in the world, of what sort or kind soever it is,—it all comes by Jesus Christ.

That it doth so we cannot doubt, having God's own word for it: and how it comes by him, we may easily understand, if we do but consider that all mankind, from the first to the last man, having sinned, and so offended the Almighty Creator and Governor of the world, they are all, and every one in themselves, equally under his displeasure, and obnoxious to the dismal effects of it, as much as the apostate angels are, to whom he never did, nor will, shew any favour or mercy at all. But the Word being made flesh, and having in that flesh or nature of man suffered death, even the death of the cross, he, the said Word made flesh, or Jesus Christ the righteous, became thereby a propitiation for the sins of the world, or for all mankind². So that God in him is become propitious or gracious to men, and is reconciled again to them, as much as if they had never offended him. This is that great evangelical doctrine which the apostle teacheth, saying, "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in

¹ Rom. xi. 6.

² 1 John ii. 2.

Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them³;" Christ having in our nature, and so in our stead, suffered the punishments which were due to us for our trespasses, therefore God doth not impute them to us; and not imputing to us the trespasses for which he was before displeased with us, he is therefore now reconciled or pleased again with us: but all this, as we are here taught, is only in and by Jesus Christ. "For," as the same apostle saith in another place, "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight⁴." Where we see that our peace with God is made through the blood of the cross; that it is by him, whose blood was there shed, that we are reconciled to God; and that we are so far reconciled through his death, that, notwithstanding we were before alienated and enemies to God, yet he presents us holy, unblameable, unreprouable in his sight: which is the same in effect with that before mentioned, that he doth not impute unto us our trespasses, but accepts of us as holy and righteous; and deals with us accordingly, not for any thing in ourselves, but only in him, and for his sake, in whom all fulness dwells, that especially whereby he is said to be "full of grace and truth." And, therefore, all the grace and favour that we, or any man, receive from God, we receive it only by Jesus Christ, out of that fulness of it that is in him. It all flows to us only through his blood; insomuch that, if he had never died for us, we had all been in the same state with the fallen angels; not only without having, but without hoping for, any grace

³ 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

⁴ Col. i. 19—22.

or mercy from God; yea, there would have been no such thing as grace and mercy in the world: for the only creatures that we know of, capable of it, are angels and men: the angels that keep their first estate have no occasion for it, having never offended God: and as he never shewed any to the angels that fell, so he never would have shewed any to fallen men, if Jesus Christ had not died for them. And, therefore, it is by him that grace came into the world at first; and it is by him only that it comes to any one now. Hence it is, that it is so often called the “grace of Christ,” and sometimes “the grace that is in Christ Jesus⁵,” and that St. Paul, as he begins all his epistles with saying, “Grace and peace,” or “grace, and mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ;” so he concludes most of them, as St. John doth the Revelation, with, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all⁶,” the rest he concludes with saying only, “Grace be with you⁷,” which is the same in effect; all grace being the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: there is none but what is in him; and we can have none but what comes from him, and by him.

But, blessed be his great name, there is no grace, no favour, no mercy whatsoever that we are capable of, but we may have it by him: and whatsoever we have, we must acknowledge ourselves indebted to him for it: which that we may be the more sensible of, I shall instance in some of those many and great favours which are particularly mentioned in God’s holy word as coming by Jesus Christ. As, for example:

Are our sins pardoned, and our obligations to punishment for them cancelled and made void; so that God doth not execute the judgments upon us

⁵ 2 Tim. ii. 1.

⁶ Rom. xvi. 20. 24. 1 Cor. xvi. 23. 2 Cor. xiii. 14. Gal. vi. 18. Phil. iv. 23. 1 Thess. v. 28. 2 Thess. iii. 18. Philem. 25. Rev. xxii. 21.

⁷ Col. iv. 18. 1 Tim. vi. 21. 2 Tim. iv. 22. Tit. iii. 15. Eph. vi. 24.

which he hath threatened? This is an unspeakable mercy indeed; but we are wholly beholden to Jesus Christ for it, for he is that "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world⁸," and it is "in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace⁹."

Are we justified before God? are we accepted of, and accounted as righteous in his sight, notwithstanding that we are not really so in ourselves? This must be ascribed wholly to the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord; for we are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus¹⁰;" "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification¹;" "who was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him²." Do we sincerely repent of all our sins? "Are we turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that we may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Jesus Christ³?" We must thank the said Lord Jesus Christ for it; for it is his gift, "whom God hath exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, as well as forgiveness of sins⁴;" and "who of God is made unto us wisdom, as well as righteousness, and sanctification, as well as redemption⁵."

Have we power to overcome the world, and to live above it? to despise all things here below, and to have our conversation always in heaven? "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God⁶?" Hath sin no dominion over us? It is "because we are not under the law, but under grace⁷," the grace of Jesus Christ. Are we delivered from this body of death and sin within us? We must thank God for that, through Jesus Christ our Lord,

⁸ John i. 29.

¹⁰ Rom. iii. 24.

² 2 Cor. v. 21.

⁴ Ib. v. 31.

⁶ 1 John v. 5.

⁹ Eph. i. 7. Col. i. 14.

¹ Ib. iv. 25.

³ Acts xxvi. 18.

⁵ 1 Cor. i. 30.

⁷ Rom. vi. 14.

as his apostle doth⁸. Can we resist the devil, so as to make him fly from us? Who gives us that power, but he that was manifested for that very purpose, "that he might destroy the works of the devil"⁹? Have we access to the Almighty Creator and Governor of the world? can we approach to draw nigh to him, who is infinitely above us, and so highly provoked by us? There is no way certainly of doing that but by Jesus Christ: "I," saith he, "am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me"¹⁰.

Are our prayers ever heard, and our petitions granted? is any thing we ask ever done for us? It is so, if we ask in the name of Jesus Christ; not otherwise: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father," saith he, "in my name, he will give it you"¹¹. And, "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it"¹².

Do we ever receive any benefit by the means of grace which God is pleased to vouchsafe unto us? are our understandings thereby enlightened, our hearts opened, our consciences touched, our passions subdued, our souls renewed and sanctified? All this is done by Jesus Christ. It was he that opened his apostles' understanding, "that they might understand the Scriptures"¹. It was he that opened Lydia's heart, "that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul"². And wheresoever two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them³, on purpose to make his word and ordinance effectual to the purposes aforesaid.

Have we the honour and the favour to be called, and really to become, the sons of God? This grace also comes by Jesus Christ; for "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"⁴. Is the Holy

⁸ Rom. vii. 24, 25.

¹⁰ John xiv. 6.

¹² Ib. xiv. 14.

² Acts xvi. 14.

⁹ 1 John iii. 8.

¹¹ Ib. xvi. 23.

¹ Luke xxiv. 45.

³ Matt. xviii. 20.

⁴ John i. 12.

Spirit of God infused into us, to renew and sanctify us, to illuminate, direct, and assist us in what we do? For this we are beholden to Christ, whose Spirit it is, and by whom alone we are made the sons and heirs of God; for, "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ⁵." All is through Christ; "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour⁶."

Can we do all things, or any thing, that God requires? Are we able to walk, as Zacharias and Elisabeth did, in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless? Who puts this strength and grace into us, but Christ Jesus? "I can do all things," saith St. Paul, "through Christ which strengtheneth me⁷." And is any thing that we do acceptable to God, notwithstanding it comes far short of what his law requires? It is so only by Jesus Christ, as St. Peter teacheth us⁸.

Have we any consolation, or support, under the troubles we meet with in the world, particularly those we suffer for Christ's sake? It is by Christ alone we have it, but by him we have it abundantly; for, "as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ⁹." Have we peace with God, or with ourselves, in our own minds? It is Christ that gives it us; "Peace I leave with you," saith he, "my peace I give unto you¹⁰." And, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world¹¹."

Can we look grim death in the face, defy its power, and triumph over it? In this we must say with the

⁵ Gal. iv. 6, 7.

⁸ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

⁶ Tit. iii. 5, 6.

⁹ 2 Cor. i. 5.

¹¹ John xvi. 33.

⁷ Phil. iv. 13.

¹⁰ John xiv. 27.

apostle, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ¹."

Do we hope to be saved? How can we be so, but by our Saviour? No way, certainly. But we believe, with St. Peter, "that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they²." It is he that prepares us for heaven, and heaven for us too; "In my Father's house," saith he, "are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also³." It is Christ, therefore, who takes in, and keeps out of heaven, whom he pleaseth; so that none ever did, or ever can, come there, but by him. And, therefore, when St. Stephen was ready to go thither, he desires Christ to receive him, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit⁴."

Thus, from first to last, all the grace and favour that ever any man did, or ever shall, receive from God, it all comes by Jesus Christ; not only that grace (as we commonly use the word) whereby he is pleased to incline our hearts unto himself, to love, and fear, and trust on him, whereby he makes us holy, and meek, and humble, and sober, and just, and charitable, and enables us sincerely to endeavour to live according to his laws; but whatsoever grace, or kindness, or mercy, he vouchsafeth to any of us, either in this world or the next, as it is all the same grace, so it all comes by Jesus Christ alike, of what kind or nature soever it is: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace," grace in general, and therefore all manner of grace, "came by Jesus Christ."

And not only grace, but truth too; and as grace, so truth, in the fullest extent of the word, came by him: the truth of the whole Levitical, or ceremonial law; for that was made up altogether of types, and shadows, and figures of "good things to come⁵." Christ was

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 57.

² Acts xv. 11.

³ John xiv. 2, 3.

⁴ Acts vii. 59.

⁵ Heb. x. 1. ix. 9. 24.

the antitype, the body, and the truth of them all⁶, and therefore is called a "Minister of the true tabernacle," in contradistinction to that where Aaron and his sons ministered; which, together with all the service of it, was made according to the pattern that was shewed to Moses in the mount⁷. And therefore that was only a copy, Christ was the original. All the sacrifices which were there offered had no virtue, or efficacy, in themselves; "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins⁸." No; Christ was the only true sacrifice that was ever offered in the world; all other signified nothing, but as they had respect to him. Wherefore, as the foresaid law was given by Moses, the truth of it came by Jesus Christ.

And if we take truth here as it is opposed to falsehood and lies, and so denotes the true objects of our faith,—what we may and ought to believe to be truly so, as it is represented and made known to us, especially concerning God, and all things belonging to our everlasting peace,—all such truth likewise came by Jesus Christ; so that no man ever had, or can have, any true knowledge of God, or believe aright in him, but by those divine revelations which Christ hath made of him by his prophets in the Old Testament, and by himself and his apostles in the New: for, as it follows in the words after my text, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him⁹. "And no man," saith he, "knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him¹." This is that which he himself intimated to Pilate, when he said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice²." Wherefore in this sense, also, truth came by Jesus Christ.

⁶ Col. ii. 17. ⁷ Exod. xxv. 40. Heb. viii. 5. ⁸ Heb. x. 4.

⁹ John i. 18. ¹ Matt. xi. 27.

² John xviii. 37.

And so did the truth of all the threatenings and promises that God hath made to mankind; whatsoever punishment God hath threatened against the sins of men, it was fully executed upon Christ, and suffered by him in their nature. As when God said to Adam, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die³," this was accomplished in Christ, the second Adam, who died in effect the same day, and is therefore said to be "slain from the foundation of the world⁴." And when he said, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them⁵," this was exactly fulfilled in Christ, when he was "made a curse for us⁶." So that notwithstanding his infinite grace and mercy in the pardon of our sins through the blood of Christ, yet God's word was verified in him; and so truth, as well as grace, came by him.

But that which seems chiefly to be aimed at in this place, is the truth of the promises which God hath been graciously pleased to make us; for "truth" being here, and all along in the Old Testament, joined with "grace," or "mercy," it hath doubtless a peculiar respect to that, as promised to us by Almighty God. But all such promises are made and confirmed to us only in Jesus Christ, who is therefore said to be "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers⁷." And "all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us⁸." That is, in him they are all and every one truth itself, which cannot but be fulfilled. To the same purpose is that, where the apostle saith, "That the covenant," wherein all the promises are contained, "was confirmed before of God in Christ⁹." And that the truth here spoken of hath respect to the covenant, appears in that, instead of "truth," the covenant is sometimes joined with "mercy;" as, "My mercy will I keep for him for

³ Gen. ii. 17.

⁴ Rev. xiii. 8.

⁵ Gal. iii. 10.

⁶ Gal. iii. 13.

⁷ Rom. xv. 8.

⁸ 2 Cor. i. 20.

⁹ Gal. iii. 17.

evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him¹." And soon after, the Psalmist having said, "My mercy will I not take from him, nor suffer my truth to fail," he immediately adds, "My covenant will I not break²." And, instead of "shewing mercy and truth," God is often said to keep "covenant and mercy" with his people³; which shews that when "truth" is joined with "mercy," or "grace," as in my text, it is principally meant of the "truth" which God manifesteth, in keeping the "covenant" and promises which he hath made to us; which being made, confirmed, and fulfilled, only in Christ, without him the truth of God could never have appeared in the world: we could never have known that he was true to his promise; neither could he have been so, unless he had first made it. Whereas, now, through Christ, his truth shines forth in every favour he is pleased to shew us; and therefore, as "the law was given by Moses, not only grace, but truth also, came by Jesus Christ."

Now from hence we may first learn, what reason the holy angels had to sing at the birth of Christ, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will toward men⁴." Seeing the glory of God's grace and truth appeared in the peace and good-will he shewed to men by him who was then born, as his wisdom, power, and goodness, did in the creation of the world.

But what cause have we poor mortals upon earth to praise and magnify the eternal God, for sending his only-begotten Son into the world, seeing he brought both grace and truth along with him! For otherwise, what would have become of us? We had all been in the same forlorn estate with the fiends of hell; destitute of all hopes of ever finding any grace or favour in the sight of God.

But did grace come by Jesus Christ? From hence we may, then, see where to find it. Not in Plato, or

¹ Ps. lxxxix. 21.

² Ver. 33, 34.

³ Deut. vii. 9. 12. 1 Kings viii. 23. 2 Chron. vi. 14. Neh. i. 5. chap. ix. 32. Dan. ix. 4.

⁴ Luke ii. 14.

Aristotle, nor in Moses himself. It is to be had only in Jesus Christ : it came by him alone, and it is in him alone that any mortal man ever did, or ever can, come by it.

But did truth, as well as grace, come by him? Then we may be confident that we may have it in him : of his fulness we may all receive, and grace for grace. We may be confident, I say, of it, seeing that in him the truth of God himself is engaged for it.

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need ⁵.” Let us, by a quick and lively faith, apply ourselves continually, in the use of the means which he hath ordained, to Christ our Saviour, to procure us favour in the sight of God, to give us repentance and forgiveness of sins, to cleanse and purify our hearts, to guide and assist us by his grace, till he hath brought us to himself in glory. And then he will certainly do it for us, as the truth is in Jesus, and as it came by him, “who liveth and reigneth with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, one God blessed for ever.”

⁵ Heb. iv. 16.

SERMON XI.

THE BLESSED ESTATE OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN
CHRIST.

JOHN XX. 29.

“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

ALL the Holy Scriptures being given by divine inspiration may truly, upon that account, be called the oracles of God. But so much of them as was spoken by Christ, when he was upon earth, hath another great title also unto that name, in that it was not only inspired or dictated by the Spirit, but uttered also by the mouth of God himself; for so was every thing that he spoke: it was spoken by God himself, with his own, though an human mouth. And, therefore, it is no wonder that so much wisdom and goodness, as well as truth, appears in all his sayings, more than in any other whatsoever; as might easily be shewn in many respects: I shall mention, at present, only one; which is, that when he spoke, as he often did, only upon some particular occasion, he ordered his words so, that they were not only proper and pertinent to that occasion, but likewise of constant and general use to all mankind, that all might be some way or other edified by every thing he said to any. As when some told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with

their sacrifice, he said, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay:" which was sufficient for the present purpose, to shew that those Galileans should not be censured or judged to be greater sinners because they suffered more than others: and then he adds, for the perpetual instruction of all men, "but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish¹." When some asked him whether it was lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar? he, upon the sight of a piece of money current among them, with a Cæsar's head upon it, gave them a general rule to be observed, not only by them in this, but by all men in every thing relating either to God or the king, saying, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's²." When he heard a certain woman crying out, and saying to him, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked;" he told her and all others, who are rather to be esteemed happy, how they may all become so, saying, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it³." The same may be observed all along in the Gospels. Whatsoever our Saviour said, though the occasion of his saying it was ever so private and particular, yet he still said something or other upon it that was generally necessary for all mankind to know.

This I have observed here, because it will serve as a key to open and explain the words of my text, spoken by our Lord upon a particular occasion, which was this: he, being risen from the dead upon the first day of the week, the same day at evening appeared to all his apostles, except St. Thomas, who happened not to be with them. The rest, soon after meeting with him, told him they had seen the Lord: but he was so far from believing it, that he said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his

¹ Luke xiii. 2, 3.² Matt. xxii. 21.³ Luke xi. 28.

side, I will not believe⁴." The apostle little thought that his Lord heard and knew what he said, as he most certainly did: for eight days after, appearing again to his apostles, St. Thomas also being with them, he singles him out from among the rest, and bids him try the experiment, without which he had said that he would not believe; saying to him, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing⁵." Which St. Thomas having accordingly done, he presently professed his belief, by saying to him, "My Lord and my God." Whereupon Jesus saith unto him, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Where he first gives the apostle a tacit reproof for his not believing without seeing: "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed:" implying that this was not believing him, or his other apostles, but his own eyes. Which though it may be truly called, as it is here, believing; yet it is such believing, as is of little value with men, of less with God, in that it is not grounded upon his authority, but upon a man's own senses. But having said this to his apostle, our Saviour, according to his usual divine manner, before spoken of, turns his discourse from him to all mankind, that all may know what that true faith is, which hath blessedness entailed upon it; and how blessed a thing it is to believe those things which we never saw, saying, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." He speaks indefinitely, not of believing only his resurrection, which gave him the occasion of saying it, but of believing in general whatsoever God hath revealed; and we are, therefore, bound to believe, although we never saw it, nor have any other ground to believe it, but only his word.

This, therefore, is that which I shall now endeavour, by his assistance, to explain; not that the words themselves need any explaining, for they are as plain as

⁴ John xx. 25.

⁵ Ibid. ver. 27.

any words can make them; but that the truth contained in them may be set in such a light, that we may all see into the bottom of it, and thereby know how we may attain to true blessedness: for which purpose we shall, first, consider what it is to believe things which we never saw, and what ground we have to do it; and, then, wherein they, who do so, are blessed. As for the first, I need not tell you what it is to believe in general; for you all know that we are said to believe a thing, when we do not doubt, but are fully persuaded of it. This is the usual signification of the word, both in our common conversation, and likewise in the Holy Scriptures, where faith, or believing, is commonly opposed to doubting: as where our Saviour saith to St. Peter, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt⁶?” and to all his disciples, “If ye have faith, and doubt not⁷.” And, if he “shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass⁸.” “He that doubteth,” saith St. Paul, “is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith⁹.” To the same purpose is that of St. James, “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering¹,” or “nothing doubting,” as the word *διακρινόμενος* signifies. From all which places it appears that, according to the Scripture, as well as common use of the word, “doubting” is directly contrary to “faith,” or “believing;” and that a man can be properly said to believe a thing only so far as he doth not doubt, but is fully persuaded of it in his own mind.

Thus St. Paul expresseth the greatness of Abraham’s faith by his being fully persuaded “that what God had promised, he was able also to perform²,” and his own, by saying, “I am persuaded³.” The word in the original is *πέπεισμαι*, from whence comes the Greek word *πίστις*, which we all along translate “faith,” and from thence *πιστεύω*, “to believe;” which words, therefore, according to their etymology, as well as common

⁶ Matt. xiv. 31.

⁹ Rom. xiv. 23.

⁷ Ibid. xxi. 21.

¹ James i. 6.

³ Rom. viii. 38.

⁸ Mark xi. 23.

² Rom. iv. 21.

use, must needs signify such a faith, or such believing a thing, whereby we are fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of it.

Now there are several ways whereby we come to be thus persuaded of a thing, or to believe it: some things we are persuaded of from the testimony of our senses; as we see a thing to be white, or black, we taste it to be sweet or bitter, and therefore do not doubt, but are persuaded it is so; and so may be truly said to believe it: as it is said of St. Peter in this chapter, that "he saw and believed⁴," and of St. Thomas in my text, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed." For in such cases, although our senses move, or induce us to think, or be persuaded, a thing is so as they represent it, yet the thought or persuasion itself is an act, not of the senses, but of the soul, and, as such, may properly be called faith, or believing; as it is here.

Other things we are persuaded of by our reason, either immediately upon the first proposal of them to our consideration, or else by necessary consequences of one thing upon another, till we come at last to that which fixed our thoughts, so that our minds rest satisfied in it, as a necessary result from such premisses; and therefore we are said to be persuaded of it. But such kind of rational persuasions also take their first rise very often from our senses: as in the case before us, St. Thomas saw Christ, after he had been dead, of the same visage and stature, and in all respects just so as he used to see him before; and he put his finger into the holes which the nails had made in his hands, and the spear in his side, and so felt them to be really such as the nails and spear had made; and from thence concluded that this must be the same person that he knew before, and saw thus pierced upon the cross, and dead; and, by consequence, was persuaded, or believed, that he was indeed risen from the dead. But this he could not but now believe in a manner whether he would or no, having so plain and sensible a demonstra-

⁴ John xx. 8.

tion of it. And that is the reason that his faith is here reproved, as not comparable to that whereby a man believes what he never saw.

But there are other things which we are persuaded of, or believe, upon the testimony, not of our own senses or reason, but that of other men's; who telling us of any thing which they have seen, or heard, or know, we, without consulting our own senses or reason, usually take their word for it, and believe it to be so as they say, only because they say it; which kind of belief, or persuasion, is as common among mankind as any of the other before-mentioned: and it is that, indeed, without which we could have no satisfaction in conversing with one another.

These are the several ways whereby we usually come to believe, or be persuaded of, one thing rather than another: but they are all liable to very great mistakes, so that we cannot certainly depend upon any of them singly, nor upon all together. But whatsoever we are thus persuaded of, we have still cause to doubt whether it be so or no, and therefore cannot in reason be fully and certainly persuaded of it: for we find by experience, that our senses often deceive us; that our reason frequently fails in its deductions of one thing from another; and that all the rest of mankind are apt to be mistaken as well as we; or, if they be not mistaken themselves, we, not knowing their thoughts, can never be sure but that they may have a mind to impose upon us, by telling us that for true, which they themselves know to be false: and, by consequence, whatsoever thoughts come into our heads any of these ways, we can never form them into a firm belief, or full persuasion, that what we think is really true, and such as we think it to be. So that if we had no other grounds but such as these are, whereupon to build our faith, we should be always wavering and doubtful, and never fix upon any thing as a sure and certain truth, how much soever we are concerned to believe it to be so; and all by reason of our fall in Adam, whereby our senses and reason, and all mankind, are so corrupted,

that whatsoever knowledge we have by their means is, at the best, no more than mere guess and conjecture.

But behold, now, and admire, the infinite goodness and mercy of God to fallen man, who, knowing what uncertainties we are put to, even in things of the greatest moment, and such as belong to our everlasting peace, hath found out another way whereby we may come to know them, and such a way as can never fail! For he being willing that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, he himself hath revealed and declared all such truths as are necessary to our salvation: so that we have his word for them; which is more, infinitely more, than the concurrent testimony of our senses, our reason, and all mankind, would have been, if they had all continued in their best and first estate; yea, so much, that it is impossible that any thing more could be ever done, whereby to assure and certify us of them: For God being truth itself, as the apostle saith, "he cannot lie⁵." Yea, "it is impossible for God to lie⁶," every lie, or falsehood, being a contradiction to his very nature. And, therefore, what God saith must needs be true, and therefore to be believed, because he saith it: for when he hath once said it, there is no room left for hesitancy or doubting, whether it be so or no; for it cannot but be just so as he saith it is, or shall be. And how much soever any truths may seem above our understanding and comprehension, yet, if they come attested by his divine infallible authority, we have infinitely more ground to be persuaded of them than we are of any thing that we ourselves may seem to comprehend or understand. And if our minds be right set to receive any truth at all, they must needs receive such in the highest manner, and with the strongest faith that they are capable of.

And yet this is the course which Almighty God hath taken, whereby to inform and persuade mankind of all necessary truths, all along from the beginning of the world. Adam was no sooner fallen by the insti-

⁵ Tit. i. 2.

⁶ Heb. vi. 18.

gation of the old serpent, but God himself said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head⁷," and so passed his own word for it, that Adam himself and his posterity might have the firmest ground that could be to believe that one should be born of a woman, which should destroy the works of the devil, and so restore mankind to their first estate. But seeing this word was not to be actually fulfilled till about four thousand years after, therefore called, "the fulness of the time⁸," when about half that time was passed God was pleased to renew and repeat it again to Abraham, who, living two thousand years after Adam, was just the middle person between him and Christ: for it was God himself also that said to Abraham, "In thee, and in thy seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed⁹." Whereby he plainly signified, that what he had before said concerning the seed of the woman in general, should be fulfilled in the seed of Abraham; but that all nations and families upon earth, as well as his, should be blessed by it, and, therefore, ought to believe so.

After this God in all ages raised up prophets, by whom he spake his mind, and revealed his will, all along, till at length he did it by his only-begotten Son too; as the apostle observes, saying, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son¹⁰." It was God, therefore, who spoke by the prophets as well as by his Son, the prophets being no more concerned, but only as his heralds to proclaim his divine will and pleasure: they uttered the words; but the words they uttered were put into their mouths by God himself; as our Saviour said to his apostles, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you¹." So it was with the prophets; "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God

⁷ Gen. iii. 15.

⁸ Gal. iv. 4.

⁹ Gen. xxii. 18; xii. 3; xviii. 18.

¹⁰ Heb. i. 1, 2.

¹ Matt. x. 20.

spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost²." They spake not of their own heads, nor what they themselves would, but what God would have them say; so that it was his word they spake, his will they declared: and therefore cried out, "Thus saith the Lord," that people might take notice, that what they were now to say was not their own words, but God's; and, therefore, should accordingly hearken to it, and receive it as such; as we find the Thessalonians did: for St. Paul, writing to them, saith, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God³." The word which St. Paul preached, though they heard it of him, yet it was not his word, nor the word of any man, but it was in deed and in truth the word of God himself; and they received it as spoken to them from God: and so all ought to receive whatsoever was spoken by Moses and the prophets, or by Christ and his apostles, and is now written in the books of the Old and New Testament; for it is all equally the word of God: "all Scripture," as the apostle saith, "being given by inspiration of God⁴." And, therefore, whosoever spoke or wrote it, it was still God's word they spoke or wrote; and all men are bound to look upon it, and receive it, with the same respect and reverence as if God had spoken it to them with his own mouth; or had written it with his own finger, as he did the ten commandments.

Now in this his most holy word, as it hath pleased Almighty God to command many things, all which we are bound to do therefore because he commands them; and to forbid many things, all which we are therefore bound to avoid because he forbids them; so there are many other things which he is pleased to say, all which we are bound to believe therefore because he saith them. As, for example, some things he affirms concerning himself, his wisdom, his power, his omni-

² 2 Pet. i. 21.³ 1 Thess. ii. 13.⁴ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

presence, his goodness, his justice, his mercy, and all his other perfections and works that he hath done concerning his Son, his divinity, his incarnation, his life, his passion, his resurrection, his ascension, and session at the right hand of the Father; concerning his Holy Spirit, his divine power, his procession, his gifts, and wonderful operations in the world; concerning the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and many other remarkable persons, and what they did in their several generations. Some things he hath been pleased to promise to those who believe and obey him; as that he will be merciful unto them, and bless them, and keep them from all evil, and give them all the good things they can desire, both in this world and the next. Some things he hath said, by way of threatening, to those who refuse to believe and serve him, as that he will punish and afflict them, in their souls, bodies, estates, relations, or the like; and at last give them their portion with the devil and his angels. Some things also he hath been pleased to foretel concerning particular persons or nations, or else concerning all mankind in general; as that they all shall rise again at the last day, and stand before Christ's tribunal, and there receive according to what they have done, whether it be good or evil; and, accordingly, the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.

These and such like things which God hath said in his holy word, although we never saw them, nor, perhaps, can understand how they should be so, as he saith they are, or shall be; yet we have the greatest reason that can be to be fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of them, in that we have the word of God himself, his infallible testimony, his divine authority for it. And they who are thus accordingly persuaded in their hearts of the truth of such things which they never saw, merely upon God's word, they may be truly said to believe, in a gospel sense, as having and exercising that faith, which, the apostle saith, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evi-

dence of things not seen ⁵." As they hope for the good things which are promised in the Holy Scriptures, so believing that God himself hath promised them, they are as fully persuaded, as confident, that they shall have them, as if they had them already; and so have them in effect already subsisting in them: and they are as sure and certain of those things which he hath there said, although they have never seen them, as if they had seen them, or rather much more, as knowing that their senses may deceive them, but God cannot. And these are they which our Saviour here pronounceth blessed, saying, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

That they are blessed we cannot doubt, having Christ's own word for it; but wherein their blessedness consisteth, and how great it is, is a matter that deserves our consideration and inquiry: for which purpose we may observe, that, as God made the world by his Word, so it is by his Word also that he upholds and governs the world in general, and mankind in a particular manner, ordering and disposing of them according as they do, or do not, believe it. He had no sooner formed man, and put him into the garden that he had planted for him, but he presently said to him, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die ⁶." If Adam had believed what God then said, he would never have ventured to eat of that forbidden fruit: but believing what the serpent said to the woman, rather than what God said to him, he eat of it, and so poisoned and destroyed himself, and his whole posterity then contained in him. But so great is the love of God to mankind, that, notwithstanding their fall through unbelief in their first parents, yet he was pleased so to order it, that none of them but might rise again and be restored to their first estate, unless they themselves,

⁵ Heb. xi. 1.

⁶ Gen. ii. 16, 17.

every one in his own person, were guilty of the same fault, even of unbelief.

For God hath spoken his mind, as I observed before, in all ages to mankind; and hath caused it to be written, too, that men might always know what he hath said, and what he would therefore have them to believe, that they might be saved. What St. John saith of his gospel, is true also of all the Holy Scriptures: "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name⁷."

But if, after all, men will not believe, "they make God a liar⁸," which is the greatest affront and dishonour they can offer to his divine goodness and truth, and, therefore, are justly condemned; as the Judge of the whole world hath told us, saying, "He that believeth not shall be damned⁹." And, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already¹." He is condemned to that everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels; which is therefore called, "The portion of unbelievers²," as being allotted for all unbelievers, as such, and for no other.

Whereas, on the other side, they who believe God, and so give him the honour that is due to his most sacred name and word, are so far from being condemned, that they are blessed by him; blessed in the highest manner that he himself can bless them. It is not in my power to reckon up all the blessings that he confers upon them, much less to describe the greatness of them. I shall, therefore, only direct you to such places in God's own word, which may give you so much light into it, that you may clearly see into the truth of this divine proposition, uttered by truth, by the word of God himself; "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

They are blessed with profit and comfort from the word of God, whensoever they read, or hear it read or

⁷ John xx. 31.

⁸ 1 John v. 10.

⁹ Mark xvi. 16.

¹ John iii. 18.

² Luke xii. 46.

preached to them; for it works effectually in them that believe³, and in none else⁴.

They are blessed with pure, and clean, and holy hearts; for God purifieth "their hearts by faith⁵," and they "are sanctified by faith that is in Christ⁶."

They are blessed with the pardon and remission of all their sins, through the blood of Christ; for "to him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins⁷."

They are blessed with the righteousness of God, whereby they are justified, or accounted righteous, before God himself; "for they are justified by faith⁸," as Abraham believed God, and it was "counted unto him for righteousness⁹," which is therefore called "the righteousness which is of God by faith¹⁰," and "the righteousness of faith" itself¹¹, and the "righteousness which is of faith¹²."

They are blessed with the love and favour of God, the Almighty Governor of the world; he is reconciled to them, and they are at peace with him: for "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ¹³."

They are blessed with the nearest relation that can be to the most high God, the chiefest good; they are his children, by adoption and grace; "for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus¹⁴," for "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name¹⁵."

They are blessed with a principle of new life, which directs, influenceth, and governs them in all their actions; for they "live by faith¹⁶." "We live," saith St. Paul, "by faith, and not by sight¹⁷." "And the

³ 1 Thess. ii. 13.

⁴ Heb. iv. 2.

⁵ Acts xv. 9.

⁶ Acts xvi. 18.

⁷ Ib. x. 43.

⁸ Gal. ii. 16.

⁹ Gen. xv. 6. Rom. iv. 3.

¹⁰ Phil. iii. 9.

Rom. iii. 22.

¹¹ Rom. iv. 13.

¹² Ib. ix. 30.

¹³ Ib. v. 1.

¹⁴ Gal. iii. 26.

¹⁵ John i. 12.

¹⁶ Habak. ii. 4. Heb. x. 37.

¹⁷ 2 Cor. v. 7.

life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me¹."

They are blessed with free access to God, and full assurance from him, that they shall have whatsoever they ask, that is truly good for them: for "what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them²."

They are blessed with success and prosperity in all their undertakings, for God's glory and their own good; "believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper³."

They are blessed with power to resist the devil, so as to make him fly from them; "above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked⁴."

They are blessed with conquest and victory over the world; for "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God⁵?"

They are blessed with a kind of omnipotence; for "all things are possible to him that believeth⁶." "I can do all things," saith St. Paul, "through Christ which strengtheneth me⁷."

They are blessed with God's acceptance of what they do, for "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain⁸." "But without faith it is impossible to please God⁹."

They are blessed with the gifts and graces of God's Holy Spirit; for "he that believeth on me," saith Christ, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive¹⁰." "In whom," saith his apostle, "after that ye believed, ye were sealed

¹ Gal. ii. 20.² Mark xi. 24.³ 2 Chron. xx. 20.⁴ Eph. vi. 16. Luke xxii. 32.⁵ 1 John v. 4, 5.⁶ Mark ix. 23.⁷ Phil. iv. 13.⁸ Heb. xi. 4. Gen. iv. 4.⁹ Heb. xi. 6.¹⁰ John vii. 38, 39.

with that Holy Spirit of promise¹.” “And that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith².”

They are blessed with the special presence of Christ himself, dwelling or residing continually in them; for “Christ dwelleth in their hearts by faith³,” so that “the power of Christ resteth upon them⁴,” as certainly as it did between the cherubims upon the ark, in the old law.

They are blessed with unspeakable joy and comfort, amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal life, through him in whom they believe, even Christ their Saviour; “Whom having not seen, they love; in whom, though now they see him not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory⁵.”

And they are blessed at last with everlasting life, consisting of all the blessings that mankind is capable of; “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life⁶.” And then they “receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls⁷.”

Thus blessed are all they that believe: thus Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Sarah, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Joshua, and Rahab, were all blessed, and all by their faith, as the apostle shews at large⁸, and then adds, “What shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens⁹.” And so he goes on, recounting the glo-

¹ Eph. i. 13.

² Gal. iii. 14.

³ Eph. iii. 17.

⁴ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

⁵ 1 Pet. i. 8.

⁶ John iii. 16.

⁷ 1 Pet. i. 9.

⁸ Heb. xi.

⁹ Ib. xi. 32—34.

rious things which the saints of old performed by their faith; that faith which, he there saith, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." From all which we may certainly conclude that, if we have any faith at all, we must needs believe what our Saviour here saith, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

But where shall we find such blessed persons now? Some I hope there are, but not many, I fear, among us. Our Saviour himself said, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth¹?" If he should come, as we do not know but he may, in our days, I doubt he would find but little. There are many, I know, who profess to believe; but there are but few that do so. They who are born and bred where the Christian faith is professed, they, in course, profess it too: and because they own, or acknowledge, or at least do not deny, the articles of it to be true, they therefore take it for granted that they believe them; whereas, if they search into their own hearts, they may easily find that they are not fully persuaded of any one of them, so as to believe it as firmly as they do those things which they see or hear; and therefore are far from having such a faith as is due to the infallible word and testimony of God himself: for it is not with the mouth, but "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness²." With the heart, when it is thoroughly convinced and persuaded of the truth and certainty of God's word, and of every thing in it, then, and not till then, can a man be truly said to believe.

I say, of God's word, and of every thing in it; for he that doth not believe every thing, believes nothing as he ought to believe it: for no man can be said truly to believe any thing that is written in God's word, but he who therefore only believes it, because he hath God's word for it. But he hath God's word for every thing that is there written, for one thing as well as for another: and therefore, if he believes any one

¹ Luke xviii. 8.

² Rom. x. 10.

thing aright, he must needs believe every thing else, as well as that; which I therefore mention, because of the great mistake that runs through the most part of the Christian world: for men commonly profess to believe some part of God's word, although at the same time they do not believe the rest. As for example, they profess to believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, and therefore hope to be saved by him: but if they really believed that, they could not but believe whatsoever else is affirmed, or promised, or threatened, or foretold in the word of God; and, by consequence, live accordingly. Which, seeing men generally do not, it is plain that, for all the great noise that is made about it, there is but little true faith in the world; there are but few so blessed, as to believe those things which they never saw.

But let us strive to be in the number of those few that are so: we all profess to believe the books of the Old and New Testament to be given by the inspiration of God, and therefore to be his word. I dare say there is not a person among us that can or will deny it; but let us do what we profess; let us really believe so as to be fully persuaded in our minds, as we can be of any thing in the world, that whatsoever is there written, is written by God himself; and, by consequence, that what is there recorded, affirmed, or said, is infallibly true, although we never saw it; and what is there promised, or threatened, or foretold, shall as certainly be fulfilled, as if we saw it fulfilled already: which that we may, we must constantly and earnestly pray to God for it; for, as the apostle tells us, "Faith is the gift of God³." But we have no ground to expect he should give us it any other way than in the use of those means which he hath ordained in his Church, whereby to beget and increase it in us. Now, as the same apostle saith, "Faith cometh by hearing⁴," not only by hearing of sermons, as some imagine, but by hearing the word of God either read, or any way made known to us; and

³ Eph. ii. 8.

⁴ Rom. x. 17.

by hearing it so as to lay it up in our hearts, keep it in our memories, ruminate upon it in our minds, and so act and exercise it upon all occasions, at all times, especially at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, where the great objects of our faith are represented to us, on purpose to strengthen and confirm it in us.

By the constant and sincere use of these means, there are none of us but may attain the divine art of believing those things which we never saw: and then how blessed, how happy shall we be! Then we shall never hear or read God's holy word, but it will go to the very bottom of our hearts, and have its due effect upon us. Then we shall never doubt of the great mysteries of our religion, but take God's word for them, whether we understand them or no. Then we shall see the finger of God in all the wonderful works and miracles recorded in Holy Scripture, and adore him for them, as if we had been present when he did them. Then we shall constantly expect the great day, wherein God hath foretold us, we must give account of all our actions, and accordingly strive to be always ready for it. Then we shall tremble at every threatening that God hath denounced against impenitent and obdurate sinners, and dread the thoughts of being in the number of them. Then all the promises which God hath made us will seem as so many strongholds, to which we may resort upon all occasions, and therefore shall never be afraid of evil tidings; for our hearts will be always fixed, trusting in the Lord. Then he that made us will have mercy upon us, pardon and accept us, admit us into the number of his own children, and lift up the light of his countenance upon us, so that we shall live continually under the rays of his divine love and favour. Then we shall know that all things work together for our good; and that these "light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eter-

nal ⁵." Then we shall be able to crucify the flesh, to withstand the temptations of the devil, to overcome this whole world, and live above, so as to have our conversations in heaven, where our treasure is, where our dear Lord and Saviour is, where our inheritance and estate lies. Then we shall always live as under the eye of God, and have respect to him in every thing we do. Then all things here below will appear to us in their proper colours; for we shall look upon them as nothing in comparison of those great and glorious objects which our faith will continually represent unto us. Then we shall have fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost, protecting, assisting, and directing us upon all occasions. Then we shall be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord ⁶."

What shall I say more? When we have once learnt to live with a constant belief of those things which God hath revealed to us in his holy word, although we never saw them, we shall then be every way as blessed as we can wish to be: blessed wheresoever we are, blessed in whatsoever we do, and blessed in whatsoever we have; blessed while we live, and blessed when we die; and all by him, in whom we believe, though we never yet saw him, even our ever blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

⁶ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

SERMON XII.

BEARING MUCH FRUIT, THE CHARACTERISTIC
OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

JOHN XV. 8.

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”

OF all the religions professed upon the face of the earth, there is none wherein men worship the true God aright, but only the Christian; neither is there salvation in any other: “For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved¹,” but the name of Christ. And, therefore, it must be acknowledged to be a great blessing, to be born and bred where this, the only true religion, is publicly and generally professed. But we must take heed that we do not take up with the bare profession, and so lose all the benefit of it, as many have done before us. When it was first planted by Christ, and propagated by his apostles, it throve to admiration, although for near three hundred years together it was no where received as the religion of the country, nor had any civil magistrates or laws made for it, but all against it: yet, nevertheless, it then spread itself, increased, and flourished, and brought forth fruit abundantly, to the glory of God, and the benefit of mankind. They who then

¹ Acts iv. 12.

professed it really were what they appeared to be, and appeared to be as they were, far better than all other sorts of people besides; more pious toward God, and zealous for his honour; more meek and humble in their own eyes; more sober, and modest, and just, and kind, and charitable towards others; every way eminent in virtue and good works. But when it was publicly received into the Roman empire, and so by degrees became the religion of whole nations, then it began sensibly to decay; for men generally took it up, as they do their habits, only because it was in fashion; and professed themselves to be Christians, for no other reason, than that which made them heathens before,—even because it was the religion of their country. Not but that there were still many who embraced it upon choice, and in good earnest: yea, doubtless, many more than there were before: but these were so few in comparison of those multitudes that came into it upon other accounts, that they could scarce be seen in the crowd; the far greatest part of those who professed it having no other design but only to profess it as their prince and fellow-subjects did, without ever troubling their heads about believing, and acting according to the principles and rules prescribed in it.

And so it is to this day: we have infinite cause to bless God, that the Christian is the only religion generally professed in the kingdom; that it is established by our laws; that we, in our very infancy, were admitted by baptism into it; and that we still continue to profess ourselves to be Christians, or the disciples of the ever-blessed Jesus Christ. But how great a blessing soever this may be in itself, it will not be so to us, unless we make a right use of it, by living up to what we profess; as, God knows, very few among us do: for being fully persuaded, as we ought, that we are of that religion wherein men may be saved, we take it for granted that we shall be so, without taking any farther care about it; and therefore go on in the outward profession of our religion, or else run, perhaps, into parties and factions, spending our zeal in hot dis-

putes about the circumstances of it, till we have none left for the main substantial duties required in it; and, by consequence, never so much as aim at, much less come to, the end wherefore Jesus Christ revealed this religion to us,—even that we may truly serve, honour, and glorify the Almighty Creator of the world, by doing the works which he for that purpose hath set us; and so living, as becometh those who are his disciples indeed, as well as by profession.

This the great Founder of our holy religion foresaw, when he first laid the foundation of it upon earth; and therefore often forewarned us of it, particularly in the words which I have now read; wherein he, for that purpose, teacheth us these three lessons: 1. That they who profess themselves his disciples, should bear much fruit. 2. That it is by this that God is glorified: “Herein,” saith he, “is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” 3. That they, and they only, who thus bear much fruit, so as to glorify God, are truly his disciples: “So,” saith he, “ye shall be my disciples.” All which I shall endeavour, by his assistance, to explain so as that you may all learn how much it concerns you all to practise, as well as to profess, that holy religion which he our Lord and Master hath taught us.

First, therefore, in that our Lord here saith, “That it is by bearing much fruit that we glorify his Father, and become his disciples,” he plainly declares it to be his will, and, by consequence, the duty of all who profess themselves to be his disciples, “to bear much fruit.”

But that we may understand his meaning aright, we must first consider what is here meant by “bearing much fruit;” and then, why his disciples should all do so. As for the first, we must observe, that our Master is here teaching us that all the power we have of doing good comes immediately from him. And that we may the better apprehend it, he compares himself to a vine; his Father to an husbandman, that taketh care of that vine; and those who are baptized into, and profess

his religion, he compares to so many branches grafted into it: to whom he therefore saith, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing²." Where, by "bringing forth much fruit," it is plain that he means the doing much good, the performing many such works as are proper for his disciples, as such, to do, by that power and Spirit which they receive from him; as a vine-branch brings forth grapes, suitable and proportionable to the juice and nourishment that is conveyed into it from the stock. And seeing he useth the same metaphor in my text, it must there also be understood in the same sense. Wherefore, by "bearing fruit," he means the doing such works, as, for the quality of them, are agreeable to the profession of his religion: and by "bearing much fruit," he means the doing of so many such works, as, for the quantity also, may exceed those which are done by men of other professions.

First, therefore, as to the quality, they are such works as Christ our Lord and Master hath set us, which he himself calls "good works³;" his forerunner, "Fruits meet for repentance⁴;" his apostle calls them, "The fruits of righteousness⁵:" such as are conformable to those eternal rules of justice and equity which he hath revealed to us in his Gospel, and enables his faithful people to perform by that Holy Spirit which he gives them for that end and purpose, which being the root and principle from which they flow, they are therefore called also, "The fruit of the Spirit." And that we may not be ignorant of what they are, the apostle hath reckoned them up particularly, and given us a catalogue of them, saying, "The

² John xv. 4, 5.

⁴ Matt. iii. 8.

³ Matt. v. 16.

⁵ 2 Cor. ix. 10. Phil. i. 11.

fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance⁶;" to which all sorts of good works, whether they have respect to God, to ourselves, or to other men, may be referred; and which the same apostle elsewhere reduceth to these three heads, saying, "That the grace of God, appearing in the Gospel, teacheth us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world⁷." These, therefore, are the works which Christ our Master teacheth all his disciples, or scholars, to do. This is that fruit which he would have all to bear, that are grafted into, and so made the branches of him, the true vine.

But they must not only bear this kind of fruit, but "much" of it. They must excel in the quantity, as well as in the quality, of what they do. Other people may do some things; but they must do all that is required of them, so as to abound in all manner of virtue and good works; according to that of the apostle to the disciples at Corinth, "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord⁸." And, "As ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also⁹," even in the grace of charity, or liberality to the poor. He would have them want nothing; no grace or virtue whatsoever that a Christian ought to have. To the same purpose is that of St. Peter, who, writing to all Christians, saith, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity¹." And then he adds, "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren

⁶ Gal. v. 22, 23.

⁷ Tit. ii. 12.

⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

⁹ 2 Cor. viii. 7.

¹ 2 Pet. i. 5—7.

nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ²." From whence we may observe, that they who have not these, all these virtues, and abound in them too, they are barren and unfruitful; so far from "bearing much fruit," that they bear none at all; for there is that concatenation and dependence of one Christian virtue upon another, that they can never be parted, but all go together: he that hath not all, hath none; and he that doth not all he ought, doth nothing as he ought to do it: and, therefore, he that would do any good at all, must be sure to do all he can; otherwise he can never be said to "bear much fruit," as all Christians are obliged to do, as ever they desire to live as becometh Christians. This is that which St. Paul means, where he prays that the Colossians "might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work³;" implying, that it is by our being fruitful, not only in some, but in every good work, that we walk worthy of so great a Lord as our Lord is, and suitably to our profession of his holy Gospel.

And certainly the disciples of Jesus Christ,—or, as they were called first at Antioch⁴, Christians,—they of all men ought to "bear much fruit," or do much good more than other people: for though all men have many obligations upon them to do so, they have more. They solemnly promised, when they were made disciples, that they would keep all God's commandments; and therefore unless they do so, they break their own promise, as well as his commands; they name the name of Christ, and therefore should "depart from iniquity⁵." They are called out of darkness into his marvellous light; and therefore should walk as the children of light, and shine as lights in the world: "They ought to be holy, as he who hath called them is holy, in all manner of conversation⁶." They know their duty better than other people, and therefore are

² 2 Pet. i. 8.³ Col. i. 10.⁴ Acts xi. 26.⁵ 2 Tim. ii. 19.⁶ 1 Pet. i. 15.

bound to do it better: for they being the scholars, or disciples, of Jesus Christ, have the best Master in the world to instruct them, and therefore must needs know all that is necessary for them to do, far better than other people can, who have none but blind guides to lead them.

But some, perhaps, may say, 'It is true, they who were Christ's disciples when he was upon earth, and conversed with him every day, they might well understand his mind, and know every thing he would have them do; but we never saw him in our lives, nor heard him speak, nor ever expect to see or hear him as long as we live: how then can we be taught by him?' To that I answer, that although we cannot hear, yet we can see, and read, the words he spake to them, and the several lessons which he taught his first disciples; and so may in all respects learn our duty as well as they, and in some sense better: for he spake many things to them only once, which they might not presently apprehend, or might soon forget, so as not to be able ever to recover them without a miracle,—even by his Holy Spirit bringing them to their remembrance. But we have his very words,—all which he ever said, that was necessary for us to know,—we have them all infallibly recorded by his said Holy Spirit; so that we can read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them; we can observe and consider them over and over again, lay them up in our hearts, and fix them upon our minds and consciences, so as to have them "always abiding in us⁷," as he himself also requires. And if we do that, as all his disciples ought, we must needs be fully instructed in every thing that he would have us to believe and do.

Hence, therefore, they who have given up their names to Christ, and are become his disciples, they are obliged, above all men, to "bear much fruit;" to be and to do good in the highest manner that they possibly can in this world: forasmuch as they are taught

⁷ John xv. 7.

of God, of their great Lord and master Jesus Christ, what, and how, and why to do it: they are taught of him to be "perfect, as their Father which is in heaven is perfect⁸." They are taught of him to "love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their mind,—and their neighbour as themselves⁹." They are taught of him, that the wicked shall "go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal¹." They are taught of him, "that except their righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven²." These and many such divine lessons they are taught of their master Christ; and particularly, that it is not by their bearing some, but "much fruit, that God is glorified:" and, therefore, unless they bear much fruit, do much good in the world, more than other people, they do not live as they are taught; though they know their duty, they will not do it; and so must "be beaten with many stripes³," as he hath also taught them.

And, besides, they ought to "bear much fruit," because they have much strength whereby to do it, much more than other people have. For, indeed, other people have none at all, not so much as to be able to think any thing that is good, much less to do it; for Christ himself here saith, "Without me ye can do nothing⁴," nothing that is good in itself, or that will be accepted of as so by God. And, therefore, all that are without him may talk of good works, and may seem to do them, but really they do none, nor can do any, no more than a branch that is cut off from the tree can bring forth fruit. This we may be sure of, for we have it from Christ's own mouth, saying, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me⁵." But then he adds, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He

⁸ Matt. v. 48.⁹ Ib. xxii. 37. 39.¹ Ib. xxv. 46.² Ib. v. 20.³ Luke xii. 47.⁴ John xv. 5.⁵ Ib. ver. 4.

that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit⁶.” Whereby we are fully assured that all who by faith are united unto Christ, and continue his faithful disciples, sound members of that body whereof he is head, they continually receive such supplies of grace and virtue from him, as to be able to bring forth much fruit,—all that is expected or required of them in that state and condition of life wherein God is pleased to set them. This St. Paul found true by his own experience, being able to say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me⁷.” And all that are truly Christ’s disciples as he was, may find and say the same as truly as he did; for his grace is always sufficient for them; his strength is made perfect in their weakness; his power resteth continually upon them⁸. And what cannot they do, who have such almighty power by which to do it? There is nothing but they can, and, by consequence, nothing but they are bound to do; otherwise the grace that is bestowed upon them would be in vain and to no purpose: which all that are Christ’s true disciples dread above all things else, and, therefore, must needs make it their constant care and study to “bring forth much fruit,” to do so much good in the world, that all that see them may admire and magnify his grace and power in them.

This brings us to our next stage,—the reason which Christ himself here gives, why his disciples should “bring forth much fruit,” even because this is for the glory of God: “Herein,” saith he, “is my Father glorified:” my Father, that is God, who is his Father not only as he is Man, but likewise as he is God and Man in one person. For being made so by the power of God, therefore, also, “that holy thing” is “called the Son of God⁹.” But he calls him his Father, also, as he himself is God; for as such, also, he is the Only-begotten of the Father, his essential and

⁶ John xv. 5.

⁸ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

⁷ Phil. iv. 13.

⁹ Luke i. 35.

eternal Son: "Herein," saith he, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit:" not that ye bear some, but much; not by your being as good, but by your being better, and doing more good, than other men.

But here we must consider what is meant by God's being "glorified;" how he is glorified by our bearing much fruit; and wherein the force of this argument lies, that we should "bring forth much fruit," because God is hereby glorified.

When God therefore is said to be glorified, we must not understand it so, as if any thing could be added to his essential glory; for that being infinite, as himself, it is not capable of any accessions, but is still the same, whether we "bear much fruit," or none at all; whether we do good or evil, it is all one to him; he is neither better nor worse, neither more nor less glorious, by any thing we do, or do not: but he is then said to be glorified when his creatures see and acknowledge his infinite and transcendent glory. It was for this end he made all things,—even to manifest his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, and the rest of his most glorious perfections, to such of his creatures, as he, for that purpose, hath made capable of reflecting upon them. And when they accordingly do reflect upon them, so as to own, and admire, and set forth the glory of them, they are then said to glorify him, or to give him the glory that is due unto his name.

And thus it is that he is glorified by all the good works that his people do; according to that of our Saviour to his disciples, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven¹." To the same purpose is that of St. Peter to all Christians; "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation²." For as the glory of his wisdom, power, and goodness, shines forth in his

¹ Matt. v. 16.

² 1 Pet. ii. 12.

creation and government of the world; so the glory of his mercy also, and truth, shines forth in the redemption of mankind, and in all the good works they do, in order to their attainment of it: for seeing they do them all only by his assistance, the glory of them must needs redound to him. Herein we see the glory of his mercy in promising such assistance, and the glory of his truth in fulfilling the said promise; and, therefore, cannot but admire and praise him for it.

And, certainly, as we have infinite cause to praise God for every thing he doth, so particularly for this,—that we, who by nature can do nothing else but sin, and are utterly averse to every thing that is good, should, notwithstanding, be enabled by him to do good works, such works as he himself can accept of as good. For this most clearly sets forth the glory of his “grace and truth, which came by Jesus Christ³.” Without which no man could ever have done any one good work: whereas by this means any man may do all that is required of him; which is as great an instance as can be given of the divine wisdom, power, goodness, mercy, and truth, all together: for here we see the glory of his wisdom shining in the admirable way that he hath made for the restoring lost man to his first estate, and the purifying his corrupt nature, so as that he may be, and do good again. Here we see the glory of his power shining in fruit brought forth by trees that were quite withered and dead; in holy and righteous acts performed by those who, of themselves, had neither power nor will to perform them: here we see the glory of his goodness shining forth in his approving and accepting of works imperfectly done, as well as if they had been done perfectly: here we see the glory of his mercy shining forth in his forgiving the sins of his people and the infirmities of their best performances: here we see the glory of his truth also shining forth in his exerting these his divine perfections continually, according as he had promised

³ John i. 17.

in Jesus Christ from the beginning of the world. So that there is nothing which he hath made or done wherein his glory shines more gloriously than it doth in the good works which his people do by his grace and power.

This may be made plain to the meanest capacity by the similitude of a vine, or vineyard, which our Lord here useth for that purpose, saying, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman⁴." For when a vine bears no fruit, it reflects much upon the husbandman, as if he had not taken that care of it, and dressed it, as he ought: but if it bear much fruit, that is much for his credit and reputation, as shewing his skill and care about it. So when they who profess themselves to be Christ's disciples, live, notwithstanding, like other men, without doing any good in the world; this is a great dishonour to their Master: for men will be apt to think that he had not taught them so well, nor taken such care of them, as he might have done. But when they are fruitful, abounding in every good work, this is highly for the honour of God, in that he plainly shews that he, according to his word, hath wrought in them "both to will and to do of his good pleasure⁵." Insomuch that they are "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God⁶." And, therefore, he might well say, "In this is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit." And we may well praise God, and bless and glorify his holy name, for all his saints and servants departed this life in his true faith and fear.

But why is this here used as an argument wherefore we should "bear much fruit,"—because God is thereby glorified? What is that to us? Wherein are we the better for that? Much every way; for that God may be glorified by us, is the best end we can ever aim at, and the greatest good we can ever get: it was for this end he made us at first; it is for this end he still

⁴ John xv. 1.⁵ Phil. ii. 13.⁶ Ib. i. 11.

sustains and upholds us in our being; it is for this end he doth every thing he doth, and gives us every thing we have; it was for this end he redeemed us, too, by the blood of his only-begotten Son: "For ye are bought with a price," saith the Apostle: "therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's⁷." And, by consequence, when we glorify God, we both answer and attain the end of our creation, preservation, and redemption, and of all the favours that God is pleased to bestow upon us; which is the greatest happiness and satisfaction to our minds that we can possibly have: for hereby our souls are at rest in their proper centre; it being impossible to look farther, or aim higher, than at the supreme end of all things: yet this they actually attain, who glorify God. Other people live to no purpose, they to the best that can be; to that for which they came into the world; and, therefore, they always live under his care and protection that sent them hither: they do the business he sent them about; they glorify him, and are so highly in his love and favour for it, that he is graciously pleased to glorify them: "Them that honour me," saith he, "I will honour⁸." And "if any man serve me," saith our Lord, "him will my Father honour⁹." And how happy must they needs be whom God himself is pleased to honour! This honour have all they who glorify God; they have it not only in this world, but in the next too; where, as they shall glorify him, so they shall be glorified by him, for ever.

From hence, therefore, we may see that, as the glory of God is the great end which we ought to propose to ourselves in every thing we do, according to that of the apostle, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God¹," so this is the greatest motive, the strongest argument, that can be used wherefore we should "bring forth much fruit,"—even because God is thereby glorified. And we

⁷ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

⁹ John xii. 26.

⁸ 1 Sam. ii. 30.

¹ 1 Cor. x. 31.

ought to do so for that very end and reason, according as we are here taught by our great Master, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

And "So," saith he, "ye shall be my disciples:" which is another motive to our "bearing much fruit," to our doing much good in the world; even because by this means we shall be Christ's disciples,—his disciples indeed. Other people may be called his disciples, and may seem to be so in the eyes of men; but they who "bear much fruit" are really so in the eyes of Christ himself: he owns, he esteems, he asserts them here to be his disciples; we have his own word for it, and therefore may be confident that all who "bear much fruit" are his disciples; yea, therefore his disciples, because they "bear much fruit:" this being both an infallible sign, that they abide in him, and the reason, also, why he reckons them to do so; "If ye continue in my words," saith he, "then are ye my disciples indeed²."

"My disciples indeed." Whereby he gives us to understand, that he hath another sort of disciples, so called, which are his disciples only in name, profession, and outward appearance; not in truth and reality: they may reckon themselves his disciples; but he doth not reckon them to be so, nor will own them for such at the last day: hark what he himself saith, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity³." How confident were these people that they were Christ's disciples! And what good ground did they seem to have for it, seeing they did not only profess his name, but had done many wonderful works by it! Yet, after all, he will not own them: and all because they wrought iniquity; they did not live as became his disciples, and therefore he will not own them to be so.

² John viii. 31.

³ Matt. vii. 22, 23.

He hath had many, too many such disciples all along: there were such in the apostles' days, of which St. Paul speaks with tears in his eyes, saying, "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things⁴." I wish we could not take up the same complaint now. But, alas! we have but too much cause, when the greatest part of those who profess themselves to be Christ's disciples, live not only in the neglect of his discipline, but quite contrary to it; when, instead of loving one another, which he hath made the mark of his disciples⁵, "they hate and devour one another;" when, instead of "seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness" in the first place, as he hath directed them⁶, they never seek it at all, nor regard it any more than as if there was no such thing to be had; when, instead of that piety and temperance which he hath taught them, they give themselves over to all manner of profaneness and debauchery; when his Divinity is openly opposed, his doctrine contradicted, his service neglected, his Sacraments slighted, his religion turned into schism and faction, and so his sacred name abused by those very persons who profess it. What is, if this be not, "to crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and to put him to an open shame?" Woe be to such Christians! It would have been well for them if they had never been baptized; well if they had never been born at all: for what will Christ say to them at the last day? Not, "Come, ye blessed;" but, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

But how happy, on the other side, are they who "bear much fruit," and so are his disciples indeed! He looks upon them as his own, and loves them to the end⁷: he takes a particular care of them, and all their

⁴ Phil. iii. 18, 19.

⁶ Matt. vi. 33.

⁵ John xiii. 35.

⁷ John xiii. 1.

concerns: he prays for them; he prays not for the world, but for them which God hath given him out of the world⁸: he is their advocate with the Father, continually making reconciliation and intercession for them; he washeth them from their sins in his own blood, and presents them holy and spotless before God: he gives them his own most Holy Spirit, to lead them into all truth, to direct them in all their ways, and to support and comfort them in all the occurrences of this life; he makes all things work together for their good: he communicates to them his own most blessed body and blood, to preserve both their souls and bodies to eternal life: he is always with them while they live; and, when they die, he receives their souls, or spirits, to himself⁹; and at the last day he will set them on his right hand, and say unto them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world¹;" where they shall live with him in glory, and "shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father²," for ever.

Now what a mighty encouragement is this to us all to "bear much fruit," seeing we shall then be Christ's disciples indeed, and, by consequence, as happy as Christ himself can make us! This, therefore, is that which I would now, in his name, advise you to. You are all baptized into Christ, and so made his disciples; you still profess yourselves to be so; you call upon his name; you hear his word; you own him to be your Lord and Saviour, and hope accordingly to be saved by him: but take heed that after all you be not deceived; as you certainly will be, unless you observe all the rules that he hath set you, and so bear the fruit that he expects from all that are planted in his vineyard: for now "the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire³." Remember what he himself hath taught you in the parable of the

⁸ John xvii. 9.⁹ Acts vii. 59.¹ Matt. xxv. 34.² Ib. xiii. 43.³ Ib. iii. 10.

fig-tree: when the master of the vineyard, where it was planted, came year after year, and sought fruit thereon, but found none, he said to the dresser of his vineyard, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground⁴?" And have a care that this be not your case. Blessed be God, you are all admitted into his Church, and so planted in his vineyard; but you serve only to cumber the ground, and therefore will be cut down ere long, and cast into the fire, unless ye bear fruit.

And "much fruit" too; for there is more expected from a tree that is planted in a garden, than from that which grows wild in a barren wilderness. It is not enough for you to be like the best of Jews, Turks, or Heathens, that never heard of Christ, or never owned him for their Saviour: you have given up your names to him, professing to be his disciples, to believe and do as he hath taught you; and if you really did so, as he is the best of masters, you would be the best of men; excelling all others, more than they excel the beasts that perish.

This, therefore, is that which I must now advise you to do; be no longer careless and indifferent about your religion, as if it was no great matter whether you be of any or no, but mind it in good earnest; follow it with all your might, tread in your Master's steps, by making it your meat to do the will of your heavenly Father, and to finish the work which he hath given you to do, even to glorify him in the world⁵. Study every morning how you may serve God best, and do most good, that day, in the place and station wherein he hath set you, and according to the ability that he hath given you. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things⁶." Think on them, and do them heartily,

⁴ Luke xiii. 7.

⁵ John iv. 34; xvii. 4.

⁶ Phil. iv. 8.

sincerely, constantly; that you may adorn your Christian profession with all the sorts of good works which it requires of you. By this you will glorify God, and shew yourselves to be Christ's disciples indeed: for you will then be as trees that bear much fruit, and will, therefore, be counted worthy to be transplanted ere long into paradise, where you will flourish, and enjoy the fruits of your labour, for ever, through him who is gone before to prepare a place for you, even Jesus Christ, "To whom be glory," &c.

SERMON XIII.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF GRACE.

2 COR. xii. 9.

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

ALTHOUGH we all desire to go to heaven when we die, yet if we look no farther than ourselves we can see no ground to hope for it; for heaven is a place where none but real saints can come,—such as have clean and pure hearts, and so are fit to live with the holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and to join with them in praising and enjoying the most high God, the chiefest, the only good: but which of us can say, “I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin¹?” If any of us say it, “We do but deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us².” For if we deal truly and faithfully with ourselves, we cannot but find by our own experience, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, much less to do any thing that is truly good³; but after all our attempts and endeavours after goodness and virtue, we still come far short of it. Though we “delight in the law of God after the inward man,” yet

¹ Prov. xx. 9.

² 1 John i. 8.

³ 2 Cor. iii. 5.

we see "another law in our members, warring against the law of our minds, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin which is in our members⁴." We all see it, or at least we may see it if we will, that our whole frame is out of order, so that we are naturally indisposed to every thing that is good, and inclined to sin and wickedness, although we know it to be so: "We know that in us (that is, in our flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for" though "to will is present with us; yet how to perform that which is good we find not⁵." But we "find then a law, that, when we would do good, evil is present with us⁶." It is always present, and sticks to every thing we do, so as to corrupt and spoil it: neither are we only unable of ourselves to do any thing that is good, but, such is our natural weakness, that, do what we can, we are always falling into sin and mischief; we stumble at every stone that lies before us; nothing can befall us but we are apt to make some ill use or other of it.

How much soever some may flatter themselves, this is plainly the case of all mankind by nature; and theirs most who are least sensible of it. How then can we ever expect to be saved? How is it possible for any of us to walk upright in the narrow path that leads to life, and to do all things necessary in order to it? No way, certainly, unless we have more strength than our own to walk and to act by. But our comfort is, that what is wanting in us we may have it abundantly supplied by Omnipotence itself; for we have an almighty Saviour, ready upon all occasions to assist us, and to carry us through the whole work of our salvation, if we do but apply ourselves unto him for it, as St. Paul here did, and therefore received this gracious answer from him; "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

But that we may see into the true meaning of this answer of God, it will be necessary to look back upon the occasion of it. St. Paul, above fourteen years

⁴ Rom. vii. 22, 23.

⁵ Ver. 18.

⁶ Ver. 21.

before he wrote this epistle, had been caught up into the third heaven, or paradise, whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell, but there he was, and heard unspeakable words, which it was not lawful, or rather not possible, for a man to utter; which was such an extraordinary favour vouchsafed to him from his Lord and Master Christ, that it was likely to have bred in him too high an opinion of himself; and so it would have done, if he that granted it had not at the same time taken care to prevent so great an abuse of it; but, "lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure⁷." What this thorn in the flesh, this messenger of Satan, was, we are not concerned to know. I know expositors make a great stir about it, some saying it was one thing, some another; but none can tell certainly what it was; and it is much if they should, seeing the apostle, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, was pleased to conceal it from us, and that doubtless out of great favour and kindness to us, it being much better for us not to know it, than to know it: for if he had specified what it was that troubled him at that time, we should have been apt to apply the answer he afterwards received only to that particular occasion, or to troubles only of that nature; whereas it being said only in general, "That he had given to him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him;" every one may apply it, as he hath occasion, to all sorts of troubles which he meets with, either from the world or the devil: and this seems to be the reason why the Holy Ghost in this, and many other places of the Scripture, speaks only in general terms, leaving us to make application of what is said to particular cases, as they happen to occur.

Here, be sure, we have an universal remedy prescribed, and recorded, for all sorts of troubles that we

can labour under; whatsoever thorn is given us in the flesh, what messenger of Satan soever is sent to buffet us, if we do but take the same course as St. Paul did for it, we shall come off conquerors, and grow better by it, as he did.

But what course did the apostle take for it? "For this thing," saith he, "I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me⁸." Where we may observe, first, that he addressed himself to God our Saviour, who all along in the New Testament is called the Lord; wheresoever we read of the Lord, it is always to be understood of the Lord Christ, and so the apostle in this place interprets it; for when he had said, that he had besought the Lord, and that the Lord had said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness:" he adds, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me;" which plainly shews that Christ was the Lord to whom he prayed, and from whom he received that gracious answer.

We may observe, also, that St. Paul did not content himself with praying once and again, but for this thing he besought the Lord thrice; as our Lord himself prayed to his Father three several times for the same thing in the same words⁹. So did his apostle pray to him; and it is left upon record that he did so, that we may learn by his example, as well as precept, to "continue instant in prayer¹," and never leave off till we have received an answer.

But that which is chiefly to be observed here, is the answer which he received. He had prayed that the messenger of Satan might depart, or be removed, from him. Our Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness;" which, though it was no direct answer to that particular request which he had made, yet it fully answered the general desire of his soul; and that

⁸ 2 Cor. xii. 8.

⁹ Matt. xxvi. 44.

¹ Rom. xii. 12.

which he would have requested, if he had known as well as our Lord did, what was best for him: he being sensible of his own weakness, and now finding a great burden laid upon him, which he thought impossible for him to bear without sinking under it, he desired it might be taken off; which he would never have desired, if he had thought that he could have borne it to the glory of God, and the furtherance of the Gospel,—the great end he aimed at in every thing he did or suffered: but our Lord in effect bids him be of good comfort, and not to trouble himself about his being unable of himself to bear what was laid upon him: for, saith he, “My grace is sufficient for thee:” as if he had said, the favour and kindness which I have for thee is sufficient to carry thee through this and all other troubles which I shall see good to exercise thee withal: and the better to confirm the apostle’s faith in what he said, he adds, “For my strength is made perfect in weakness;” that is, the height and perfection of my power shines forth most gloriously in the weakness and infirmities of my servants: the weaker they are in themselves, the more doth my strength appear in my assisting and enabling them to do and suffer my will and pleasure.”

Our Lord, therefore, granted not only all the apostle prayed for, but much more: he had prayed only to be eased of that trouble he now lay under; and so he was, by being told by Christ himself that he should have strength enough whereby he might easily bear it, and not only that, but all other troubles that he should ever meet with; for, though his prayer was particular, the answer is general: “My grace is sufficient for thee: my strength is made perfect in weakness, not only in this, but upon all occasions whatsoever:” and so the apostle plainly understood it, as appears from his drawing this inference from it: “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” He speaks of all his weaknesses or infirmities in general, that he would rather glory in them than sink under them, now

that our Lord had given him such a general and gracious answer as this is; and though it was given only to St. Paul, and that too upon a particular occasion, yet it is left upon record among the oracles of God, that all Christians may take notice of it, and make the same use of it upon all occasions as he did. For what is said in the Scripture to any one of the saints of God, as such, is designed for all of that communion, as well as for that particular person to whom it is spoken; and every one else may receive the same benefit and comfort from it which he did: as when God said to Joshua, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee²;" though this was spoken only to him, and likewise upon a particular occasion, even his leading the children of Israel into the land of Canaan; yet the apostle applies it to himself, and to all the people of God, and to all occasions too that any of them can have for it, saying, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me³." So here, the Lord having said to St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness," we all may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, his grace is sufficient for us, his strength shall be made perfect in our weakness;" and therefore we also most gladly will rather glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon us.

They, who have no regard to their future state, may hear or read this without any concern; but such as really seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness cannot but be mightily affected with it, in that they are here assured by Christ himself that, upon their addressing themselves to him for it, he will supply them continually with grace and strength sufficient to carry them through all the changes and chances of this mortal life, till he hath brought them to himself

² Josh. i. 5.

³ Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

in glory. For my own part, I think it is the only support and encouragement we have under the many difficulties that we meet with in our passage to heaven; and you would all be of the same mind, if ye did but fully understand, and duly consider, what Almighty God our Saviour here saith; which, therefore, that ye may, I shall endeavour to give you the true sense and meaning of these words as they lie in order.

First, therefore, our Lord here saith to every one that believes in him, as well as to St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee;" where by his "grace," he means that special love and favour which he hath for all his faithful servants and disciples. He himself is "full of grace and truth⁴." "And it is of his fulness that we all receive, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ⁵." All the grace and favour that God is pleased to shew us comes by Jesus Christ, and properly the grace of God, as he is our Saviour and Redeemer; and, therefore, it is commonly called, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ⁶." "For ye know," saith the apostle, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich⁷." This was the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he impoverished himself to enrich us, he came down to earth to advance us to heaven; "he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; he died that we might live." "And greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends⁸." Yet this love had Christ for all mankind, and still shews it to all that believe in him, and love him; for they are his own even while they are in this world; and "having loved his own that are in the world, he loves them unto the end⁹."

This, therefore, is that special love and favour which he here calls, as we translate it, his "grace," and saith

⁴ John i. 14.⁵ Ver. 16, 17.⁶ Rom. xvi. 20.⁷ 2 Cor. viii. 9.⁸ John xv. 13.⁹ Ib. xiii. 1.

it is sufficient for them. He doth not only promise it shall be, but he positively affirms it is so. "My grace," saith he, "is sufficient;" in the present tense; that we may be confident that it always is so. But to what is it sufficient? To every thing that is any way necessary to our obtaining eternal salvation; for "we believe," as St. Peter saith, "that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved¹." And if we shall be saved by his grace, his grace must needs be sufficient for whatsoever is required towards our being saved; for if there was any one thing wherein his grace could not help us out, we might be lost for ever notwithstanding all that he hath done and suffered to prevent it: but there is no fear of that, for he himself hath said, "That his grace is sufficient for us;" and, therefore, we may be sure it is so, in all and every respect whatsoever.

It is sufficient, first, for the rectifying all the disorders and distempers in our depraved nature, whereby we are so much indisposed for the doing good, and inclined to vice and wickedness, according to the several humours that are predominant within us. Several men, we know, are of several complexions; scarce any two in all things alike: some are of a hot and choleric disposition, and, therefore, apt to be passionate and angry upon the least occasion, and perhaps upon none at all; others are cold and phlegmatic, and, therefore, apt to be dull, listless, and unactive, not caring to move or stir upon any account, although the glory of God, and their own eternal welfare, depends upon it. In some melancholy prevails, so as to keep their spirits too low and sad; in others the animal spirits are so brisk and nimble, as to make them prone to be airy, phantastic, proud, ambitious, and self-conceited. Thus every one hath some corrupt humour or other in him, that is apt to lead him into sin, and put him under its dominion, so that it will reign in his mortal body, unless it be subdued by the grace of Christ; but,

¹ Acts xv. 11. Eph. ii. 5. 8.

whatsoever it be, his grace is sufficient to bring it, and to keep it under; "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust²." He considers the several distempers and indispositions that every one is subject to, or labours under, and is ready upon all occasions to apply suitable remedies to every one of them; and he doth it for all those that are in his grace and favour; as all are who do not trust in their own works, but in him for it; "Sin shall not have dominion over them; because they are not under the law, but under grace³," even the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is sufficient also against all the temptations and assaults of "our adversary the devil, who, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour⁴." He is prying into every corner, and observing what temper people are of, and what they are most inclined to; and accordingly he lays proper baits before them, wherewith to catch and draw them into his net, and the same wretched state with himself: he hath a thousand tricks and devices, more than we can imagine, to cheat men of their souls, by alluring them insensibly into this or the other mortal sin, according to their several inclinations: if that fails, he employs his agents to attack their faith, or draw them into some damnable heresy, which he knows will destroy them as effectually as any sin whatsoever: his power, also, is as great as his subtilty; so great, that the strongest man in the world is no more able to stand before him upon his own legs than the weakest. But, howsoever, they who are in the favour of Christ need never fear him, for his grace is always sufficient for them; "he will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it⁵." As we see notably exemplified in St. Peter: to whom our Lord said; "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have

² Ps. ciii. 14.

⁴ 1 Pet. v. 8.

³ Rom. vi. 14.

⁵ 1 Cor. x. 13.

prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren⁶." Satan, it seems, had a mind to shew the utmost of his power and skill upon St. Peter, to cast him, if it was possible, down from that happy state in which he was; and God was pleased to give him leave to do all he could; but Christ, having a kindness for him, prayed that his faith might not fail; by which means, though the apostle had as great a fall as ever man had, yet he soon got up again, and grew stronger afterwards, so as to be able to strengthen others also: whereby we plainly see how sufficient the grace of Christ is for those who live under it against all the malice and power of hell; and therefore it is no wonder that St. Paul had a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. Christ had no sooner said, "My grace is sufficient for thee," but he immediately defied the devil and all his messengers; and was so far from being troubled at his temptations, that he rejoiced in them, in that they afforded him matter of triumph and glorying in the grace and power of Christ.

His grace is sufficient also in all states and conditions of life; whether a man be a prince or a subject, a master or a servant, rich or poor, high or low in the world, of this, or that, or the other lawful calling, office, or employment, whatsoever it is, if he hath but the grace and favour of Christ, he needs no more to direct him what to do, to assist and strengthen him in the doing of it, and to carry him safely through all the prosperity and success, as well as through all the crosses, troubles, and disappointments, that he can ever meet with in it. For Christ having all things put under his feet, and being given to be head over all things to his Church and people, he makes all things in the world work together for their good, and enables them by his grace and Holy Spirit to make some good use or other of every thing that happens, so as to turn it to their own advantage; for he never leaves them, but

⁶ Luke xxii. 31, 32.

is always present with them wheresoever they are, and ready to assist them upon all occurrences; especially when they are in any great danger or necessity, he then makes haste to help them; as when St. Paul was brought to his trial at Rome, at his first answer no man stood with him, but all men forsook him: but, as he himself observed, "The Lord stood with him, and strengthened him; and delivered him out of the mouth of the lion⁷." Neither was that the only instance he had of it, for he found the same divine grace and assistance going along with him through the whole course of his life, and all the changes of it, which were as many and as various as ever man went through: "I know," saith he, "both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me⁸." Which may serve for a comment upon the words of my text, shewing how the grace of Christ was sufficient for him in whatsoever state he was; he was no sooner in it, but he was enabled by Christ to bear it with that evenness and composure of mind, that he was neither exalted with prosperity, nor dejected at the troubles which befel him: nothing could move him one way or other; honour and disgrace, abundance and want, fullness and hunger, was the same thing to him, because the grace of Christ was with him, and endued him with so much strength as was suitable and proportionable to his present circumstances, be they what they would.

But here we must farther observe, that the apostle speaking of his being able by the grace of Christ to bear whatsoever was laid upon him, he takes occasion from thence to assert, upon his own experience, that it was sufficient also to enable him to perform whatsoever was required of him, saying, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me:" whatsoever

⁷ 2 Tim. iv. 17.

⁸ Phil. iv. 12, 13.

he was bound to do by the law of God, he was able to do it by the grace of Christ. He excepts nothing: "I can do all things," saith he: and so may all say who truly believe in Christ, as well as he; whatsoever is required of them in their several places and callings, whether in relation to God, their neighbours, or themselves, they are able to perform it, though not by their own strength, yet by Christ that strengtheneth them; though they have no strength in themselves, they have enough in him to carry them through their whole duty, so as to do all such good works as God hath set them.

Let us hear what he himself saith to this purpose: "I," saith he to his disciples, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing⁹." This Christ, this truth itself, saith: what then if there be some proud and self-conceited people in the world, who flatter themselves and others with an high but groundless opinion of their own natural parts and power to do good, as if they were able to do mighty things with it? What then? Is not Christ to be believed before all the men in the world? All men are liars; and they most of all, who so plainly and directly contradict the truth itself. He hath said, that "without him we can do nothing;" and therefore I am sure that we cannot do any one good thing without him; and I am sure, that if we abide in him, and he abides in us, we shall bring forth much fruit, or do much good in the world, even all that is required of us, because he himself hath also said it; and seeing he hath said it, we may be confident that he will make it good, so that his grace shall be sufficient to work in us both to will and to do all manner of virtuous and good works, which are required of us in order to our obtaining eternal salvation by him: and though, as they are done by us in this our imperfect state, there may be many failures and imperfections in

⁹ John xv. 5.

them, yet his grace is also sufficient to make up all their defects, and to render them as acceptable to God in him, as if they were absolutely perfect in themselves; for, as his apostle tells us by his direction, "All these our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God (though not in themselves, yet) by Jesus Christ¹."

And verily it is well for us that we have it from Christ's own mouth, that his grace is thus sufficient for us; otherwise, considering the frailty of our human nature, we could never have thought it possible for us, by any means whatsoever, always to stand upright, much less to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; but now we cannot doubt of it, seeing Christ himself hath said it; and not only said it, but, for the greater confirmation of our faith in it, hath likewise given us the reason of it; such a reason as must needs convince us that, notwithstanding all our weakness and infirmities, his grace is sufficient for us; "For," saith he, "my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Where by "weakness," as it is opposed to the strength of Christ, we can understand nothing else but our natural infirmities, our impotence and inability to do, or suffer, the will of God as we ought; which in those who are unregenerate, and therefore not interested in the grace of Christ, is so great, that they can neither do, nor speak, nor so much as think, any thing aright²: they may be wise to do evil, ingenious and subtle in the management of their worldly affairs; "but to do good they have no knowledge³," much less any power at all. And they who are born again, and made the children of God, and therefore are led by his Holy Spirit; they also are still subject to so many infirmities by reason of their original corruption, that they cannot make any one true step in the ways of God, any farther than as they are led by the same Spirit. This our Lord himself took notice of in his own disciples, when they could not so much as keep themselves

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

² 2 Cor. iii. 5.

³ Jer. iv. 22.

awake while he was in his agony, saying, "The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak⁴." The flesh, or that part which we derive from our first parents, is weak, so weak, that it is not able of itself to execute the will of the Spirit that is in us; but is rather apt to put us upon acting just contrary to it, as St. Paul observes, "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do⁵." The same all men may see in themselves, if they will but look impartially into their own hearts and ways: but none are more sensible of it than they who set themselves in good earnest upon performing sincere obedience to the whole will of God. They often find their heads cloudy, their hearts cold and careless, their memories unfaithful, their passions turbulent, their thoughts scattered and wandering from what they are about; their whole man so feeble, and out of tune, that, do what they can, they cannot do what they would, at least not so as they would, and ought to do it; which is a great trouble to them,—so great, that it is sometimes ready to sink them down into despair, and to make them cry out with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death⁶?"

But what doth the apostle do in this wretched case? He immediately lifts up his heart to heaven, and cries out with the same breath, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord⁷." Implying that God had hitherto delivered him, for which he heartily thanks him; not doubting but that he would still deliver him, though not for his own sake, yet through Jesus Christ our Lord. There was all his hope and confidence; there was all his joy and comfort; it was all placed in Jesus Christ, who, being the Lord of life, could deliver him when he pleased from the body of death, and, the more to assure him of it, had said to him, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." "My strength," saith he; to let us know, that it is his own strength, that he hath it

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 41.

⁶ Ib. 24.

⁵ Rom. vii. 19.

⁷ Ib. 25.

in himself, as he is God our Saviour. As God, he is almighty, and can do what he will in the world; and as God our Saviour, he exerciseth this his almighty power in the behalf of his Church and people. "My Father," saith he, "worketh hitherto, and I work^s." As the Father is always at work in the government of the world, so God the Son is always working in them who believe and trust in him, that they may be saved, and therefore "is able also to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them⁹." Because he is continually making intercession for them, therefore his divine power is continually exerting itself in them, that he may save them to the uttermost.

And thus his strength is made perfect in weakness; in the weakness of those upon whom it is exerted: the weaker they are in themselves, the more strength they receive from him; and the more perfectly doth his strength appear in supporting and saving of them; it is always with them and in them. But they "have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of men¹." They themselves are but frail and weak creatures, like earthen vessels made of coarse materials, and soon broken; and, therefore, the excellency and perfection of his power shines forth most gloriously in preserving them through faith unto salvation, that all the glory of it may redound wholly unto him; which the apostle was so sensible of, that when our Lord said to him, "My strength is made perfect in weakness," he presently adds, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong²." The weaker he found himself, the more was he strengthened by Christ; and as the strength of Christ was thus made perfect in his weakness, so is it in all others, who, being sensible of their own weak-

^s John v. 17.¹ 2 Cor. iv. 7.⁹ Heb. vii. 25.² 2 Cor. xii. 10.

ness, lay hold on him, and depend wholly upon his strength to help and save them: they also may say as truly as St. Paul did, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me³."

The last thing to be observed in these words is the inference which the apostle draws from what our Lord had said to him: he had said, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness:" from whence the apostle immediately infers, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." He was now no longer overwhelmed with so much grief and sorrow for his infirmities, and natural inability to do the will of God, nor for the troubles which should befall him for it, although he was not able by his own strength to bear them, but rather rejoiced and gloried in them, as being a proper occasion for Christ to shew forth the glory of his power, or, as he himself expresseth it, "That the power of Christ might rest upon him." In allusion, as the original word imports, to his resting between the cherubim over the mercy-seat in the tabernacle, and there manifesting his glory and power unto his people; so he now rests upon those who believe in him: he "dwells in their hearts by faith⁴." But wheresoever he is, there he exerts his power; and the weaker the place of his residence is, the more doth his power appear; and, therefore, as the apostle did, so should we, not despond and despair at the sense of our infirmities, but rather be glad and rejoice that we have such an almighty Saviour, "whose strength is made perfect in our weakness;" and take occasion from thence to live with a constant belief and trust in him, that his power may rest upon us, and the glory of it appear most gloriously in us.

And verily, whatsoever other people may think, they who are touched with a due sense of their sins, and manifold infirmities, cannot but receive unspeakable

³ Phil. iv. 13.

⁴ Eph. iii. 17.

comfort, as well as wholesome advice and counsel, from what they have now heard; for they being conscious to themselves that they have not only offended the Lord of Hosts, the Almighty Governor of the world, already, but cannot possibly of themselves ever do any thing else but provoke him, and so “treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;” how glad must they needs be to hear it from his own mouth, that, notwithstanding all their provocations and infirmities, “his grace is sufficient for them;” sufficient not only to expiate all their former offences, but to cure them of all their distempers, to arm them against all temptations, to support them in all conditions, to carry them through the whole compass of their duty, and to reflect such a lustre upon it from the glory of his own righteousness and merits, that God himself will be well pleased with it; that “in the Lord they may have both righteousness and strength⁵,” and that “his strength is made perfect in their weakness,” so as to shew itself in a more especial manner, when they have most occasion for it: how can they hear this, and not sing with the prophet, “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation⁶!”

But that we also may thus rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation, we must take special care that we do not turn his grace into lasciviousness, but that we apply and improve it to the purposes for which it is designed. Now the apostle tells us, that “the grace of God that bringeth salvation teacheth us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world⁷.” This, therefore, is the lesson we must learn, this is the use we should make of the grace of God our Saviour; and for this it is sufficient in us all, as many in all ages have found by their own experience, who,

⁵ Isa. xlv. 24.

⁶ Ib. xii. 2.

⁷ Tit. ii. 11, 12.

notwithstanding their original sin, and their natural imperfections and infirmities consequent upon it, yet by the grace of Christ became real saints while they were upon earth, and are now glorified and made equal to the angels in heaven. And why should not we be so as well as they? If we be not, it is our own fault: the grace of Christ is as sufficient for us as it was for them.

“ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need^s.” Let us employ ourselves continually in the use of the means which he hath appointed wherein to bestow his grace upon us; and, whatsoever we do in word and deed, let us do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, nothing doubting, but steadfastly believing, that, according to his word, “ His grace shall be sufficient for us, and his strength made perfect in our weakness; that he will wash us from our sins in his own blood; that he will preserve us from all evil, and make all things work together for our good; that he by his almighty power and Spirit will direct, sanctify, and govern, both our hearts and bodies in the ways of his laws, and in the works of his commandments, so as to bring us at last to that everlasting kingdom which he is now preparing for us in the highest heavens; that we may live with him who liveth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for ever.”

^s Heb. iv. 16.

SERMON XIV.

FAITH IN GOD AND CHRIST, A SOVEREIGN REMEDY
AGAINST ALL TROUBLES.

JOHN xiv. 1.

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”

BEHOLD here the love and care that our great Master had of his scholars and disciples! He did not love to see their heads hang down, their countenances sad, their eyes bedewed with tears, nor their hearts oppressed with grief and sadness, for any thing, no, not for his own departure from them, which was certainly one of the greatest troubles that could befall them. He had told them, in the foregoing chapter, that he must now leave them, and go to a place where they could not as yet come; and, perceiving them to be much troubled at it, he cheers them up, bids them be of good comfort; “Let not your heart be troubled,” saith he: “ye believe in God, believe also in me;” and so directs them what to do, that they may keep their hearts from being troubled at any thing in the world. For though their sorrow for his departure gave him the opportunity of speaking these words, yet he did not intend them only for that particular occasion, and, therefore, takes no notice at all of it, but expresseth himself in general terms, “Let not your heart be troubled,” and so signifies his will and pleasure to us, that, whatsoever

troubles we meet with in the world, yet he would not have them come near our hearts, so as to disturb and discompose them, but that we take all the care we can to keep our hearts free from all manner of disquiet and perturbation at any thing that happens in the world, that so we may be always in a fit temper to serve and honour him that made and governs it, with cheerfulness and alacrity of mind, which he therefore requires of us, and so makes it our duty, saying, "Let not your heart be troubled:" yours who are my friends and disciples, who profess to love me, and to obey me; I speak to you, not to others; for all others not only may, but ought to be troubled in heart, and must be so before they can come to me for rest; and, indeed, they have all the reason in the world to be troubled at every thing, because every thing is accursed to them: but as for you, let not your heart be troubled at any thing: "ye believe in God," and therefore need not be troubled; but, that ye may not be so, "believe also in me."

Where we may observe, that our blessed Saviour, the great physician of souls, prescribes faith in God, and in himself, as the most sovereign antidote to preserve our hearts from being troubled, and the best physic to cure them when they are so; and hath left it upon record as a general rule for all Christians to observe, at all times, in all places, in all conditions and circumstances of life, that, whatsoever happens, they still act their faith aright, and by that means keep their hearts from being troubled. But, for that purpose, they must not only believe in God, but in Christ too; not as if Christ was not God; for if he was not God, we could not be obliged to believe in him; or rather, we should be obliged not to believe in him; this being one of those duties, or religious acts, which are proper and peculiar only to God himself, and therefore not to be communicated to any creature; so that our Saviour commanding us to believe in him, as well as God, doth plainly intimate to us that he himself also is God; otherwise he would never have required so great an act

of divine worship as faith is, to be performed to himself in the same manner as it is performed to God, saying, “Ye believe in God, believe also in me.”

But why, then, doth he require us to believe particularly in him, when as he being God, whosoever believes in God, must needs believe in him, who is so? To understand this, we may observe that our Saviour doth not say, Ye believe in the Father, believe also in me. If he had expressed himself after that manner, he would have thereby required us only to believe in him the Son as such, as well as in the Father, according to what he himself elsewhere saith, that “all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father¹ ;” and so would have signified no more than that the Father and the Son being both of the same divine nature, we ought to believe in both alike. But our Saviour doth not say, Ye believe in the Father, but, “Ye believe in God,” or “Believe ye in God, believe also in me,” and so propounds himself to be the object of our faith, not only as God the Creator and Governor of the world, but likewise as God-man, and so the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, who was now ready to offer up himself as a sacrifice for their sins, and then to go to heaven to prepare a place for them there, as he tells his disciples in the following verse; and so directs us to the most infallible remedy against all manner of troubles, both temporal and spiritual: from all temporal troubles, by believing in that infinitely wise, and good, and powerful God, that governs the world; and from all spiritual troubles, by believing in him our almighty and all-sufficient Saviour, “who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them².” According to which method, therefore, I shall first shew that believing in God is the most effectual means to preserve our hearts from being overwhelmed with any outward calamity that may befall us in this world; and, then, that believing Christ

¹ John v. 23.

² Heb. vii. 25.

is the surest way to fortify our hearts against those inward troubles which are so apt to assault and molest us, whilst we are in our imperfect state here below.

As for the first; our Lord here supposeth, or rather taketh it for granted, that we shall meet with troubles in the world, according to what he elsewhere tells his disciples, saying, "In the world ye shall have tribulation³." Which is generally true, not only of Christ's disciples, but of all mankind. All mankind are guilty of sin, and therefore cannot but be continually subject to the troubles which attend it. "Man is born unto trouble," saith Job, "as the sparks fly upward⁴." It is not more natural for sparks to fly up into the air, than for man to fall down into trouble, of one kind or other; yea, as Job again observes, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble⁵." Though his life be short, it is very troublesome; there being no place, no time, no calling, no condition of life, that a man can be in, but he finds some inconvenience, some trouble, or other in it. Insomuch that, though no man hath all troubles, all have some: even they also who may seem to others to have the fewest, yet really they have the most and greatest of all. But there never yet was, nor ever will be, a man upon the face of the earth that always was, or will be, perfectly free from trouble of one sort or other. Some are troubled in their minds with melancholy and dismal thoughts and fears, when they have, perhaps, no real cause for it. Others are troubled in their bodies with pain or sickness, or loss of limbs, or the want of their senses, as their hearing, or seeing, or smelling, or the like. Some cannot speak at all; others so imperfectly, that they can scarce be understood. And they who enjoy health and soundness both of mind and body, yet are often troubled about their estates: some are troubled to get wherewith to live and maintain their families; others are as much troubled to keep and manage what they have gotten; and yet, after all their care and

³ John xvi. 33.

⁴ Job v. 7.

⁵ Ib. xiv. 1.

diligence, sustain great losses either at sea, or by bad debts or lawsuits, or by the knavery and cheating of those they deal with, or else by their own relations or servants.

Some are troubled for want of children; others are troubled with those they have, as being foolish, or distracted, or sickly, or maimed, or defective in their senses, or extravagant, or idle, or undutiful either to God or to them.

Some are troubled at the frowns of their superiors, others at the scoffs of their neighbours; some at their own private, others at the public affairs; some at home, others abroad; some in prison, others in slavery; some with the loss of life, others with the fears of it: and so some are troubled with one thing, some with another, but every one with one thing or other.

For the proof of this I dare appeal to the experience of all mankind, and to yours particularly who are here assembled; there not being, I believe, one person among us, who hath not his troubles, as well as sins, of one kind or other; yea, our blessed Saviour himself, who knew no sin of his own, yet having taken ours upon him, was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:" but it was for us that he was troubled; and therefore he would not have us to be troubled too, but directs us how to preserve our hearts from being touched with any of the troubles that befall us here below, even by believing in God, saying, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God," or, as the word may be rendered, "'Believe ye in God,' the all-knowing, all-wise, all-mighty, all good and gracious Preserver, Governor, and Disposer of all things in the world, so as to trust and rely upon him, to prevent the troubles you fear, remove those you feel, to bless and sanctify them to you, or to give you so much strength to bear them, that they may seem light and easy to you, that so your hearts may not be discomposed, much less overwhelmed with them." And, verily, could we always thus believe in God, whatsoever happens in the world, we should never be much troubled at it; for,

amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal life, our hearts would still be fixed, trusting in the Lord; for which purpose, therefore, whensoever ye find your hearts begin to be troubled at any thing which befalls you, lift them up immediately unto God, and believe,

First, that it comes from him, at least not without his permission and providence, who orders and overrules not only the great affairs of kingdoms and empires, but the private concerns also of every particular person in them, with all and every circumstance thereof; insomuch that there is not the least thing imaginable can happen to any man, but, if he looks narrowly into it, he may see the hand of God in it, and then must needs rest fully satisfied with it.

This is that great lesson which Christ our Master taught his disciples, and which he taught them to make use of too upon such occasions, even whensoever they found their hearts troubled with the fear of their potent and malicious enemies, saying, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell;" and then he adds, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows⁶." As if he should have said, You see a multitude of sparrows, and such like inconsiderable birds flying about in the air; and yet not so much as one of them can be killed, and so fall to the ground, without your Father's leave: but every one of you is of much more value with God than many of them; for he is your Father, and looks upon you not only as his creatures, but his children too, and takes care of you accordingly; and, therefore, ye may be confident that you can never fall to the ground, nor any thing befall you against your heavenly Father's will, who numbers the very hairs of your heads, so that not so much as one of

⁶ Matt. x. 28—31.

them can be touched without his leave; what need you then fear what man can do unto you, who can do nothing to you but what your Father gives them leave to do? and he, be sure, will give them leave to do nothing but what is really for your good.

This is, in short, what our blessed Saviour intends in this divine discourse; from whence we may positively affirm that there is not the least thing that happens in the world, but what is managed by the steady hand of Divine Providence, and, whosoever may be the instruments, or secondary, God himself is the first cause of it: which whosoever firmly believes, as all Christians must do, can never be troubled at any thing that befalls, as always seeing his heavenly Father's hand in it: as we see in old Eli; when Samuel had told him from God, that his house and family should be destroyed; he, considering whence the message came, was so far from being troubled, that he submitted himself wholly to him, saying, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good⁷." Thus, when Shimei cursed David, David considering that whatsoever malice Shimei bare him in his heart, he could not have vented it so without God's leave, he bare it patiently, saying, "The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so⁸?" And whosoever thus looks upon every thing which comes to pass as coming from God, and believes it to be his will, how grievous soever at first sight it may seem unto him, when he recollects himself he will be so far from being troubled at it, or repining against it, that he will say with David in another case, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou," O Lord, "didst it⁹." For he, that believes that God doth a thing, cannot but at the same time believe it to be well done, yea, the best that could be; and therefore cannot in reason or conscience be troubled at it, but must rather acquiesce in it, as believing it to come from Him who knows what is fit and proper to be done infinitely better than he doth.

⁷ 1 Sam. iii. 18.

⁸ 2 Sam. xvi. 10.

⁹ Ps. xxxix. 9.

And this is the next thing which we must believe concerning God, in order to the keeping our hearts from being troubled. We must believe him to be omniscient, that he knows all and every thing that is thought, or spoke, or done; every thing that lives, or moves, or hath any being; every thing that is in the whole world. Neither is there any creature, as the apostle saith, that is not manifest in his sight, "but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do¹." He knows what all the angels are doing in heaven; what all the devils are contriving in hell; and what all their agents are acting upon earth. He knows the several inclinations and qualities, the virtues and the vices, of every creature, together with the tendencies and consequences of all events; what will do us good, and what hurt, and how and when it will do so. He knows what enemies all and every one of us have in the world, what hatred they bear, and what mischief they design against us, and which is the best or the only way to prevent it. He knows the temper and complexion of our bodies, the several dispositions of our minds, and the respective circumstances of our lives, and how to suit his providences to us, and to make them fit and proper for us. In short, he knows every thing that is in us, every thing that is about us, every thing that concerns us, or hath any relation to us. Insomuch that, although many things may happen to us otherwise than we expected, yet the best Friend that we have in the world foresees and orders them all for us; and, therefore, what reason have we to trouble our heads or our hearts about any thing that may or may not befall us, seeing we have such an infinitely wise and knowing Father to take care of us, and of all our concerns; and if we believe in him, will most certainly do it?

Neither is he less able, than he is willing, to prevent any evil we fear, to remove what we feel, or to change the nature of it, and make it really good for us; for

¹ Heb. iv. 13.

he, as the first and supreme Cause, holds the chain of all inferior and secondary causes always in his own hand, ranging and managing all and every one of them as seemeth best to him: so that all the powers in heaven, and hell, and on earth, are equally subject unto him, and he makes them do his will, howsoever contrary it may be to their own; as the wise man saith, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will²." And so are the hearts of all the men in the world as much under the power as they are always under the eye of God, who winds and turns them so, that, whatsoever they design, they can bring nothing to pass without him, nor any thing but what he will, as the wise man again observes, "There are many devices in man's heart; nevertheless the council of the Lord, that shall stand³." And, therefore, what need we fear any or all the creatures in the world, although they should set themselves in array against us, seeing there is One above them who can abate their pride, assuage their malice, infatuate their councils, confound their devices, and make them fall into the same net which they lay for others, and cause that, which they design for our ruin, to be the most effectual means of our peace and welfare; and so produce our good out of the very mischief that was intended for us? As we see in the history of Joseph: for his brethren having, out of their envy and malice against him, sold him to the Ish-meelites to live in perpetual slavery, as they thought and intended, hoping never to hear any more of him; God was pleased so to order it in his providence, that this very thing proved the occasion of his being advanced not only above all the subjects of Egypt, but above his very brethren, too, that sold him; so that they were forced to bow and cringe to him, and lay at his mercy, not only for their livelihood, but for their very lives too, which he could have taken away when he pleased. Thus God was pleased to manifest his

² Prov. xxi. 1.

³ Ib. xix. 21.

love unto him in the hatred which his brethren bare him, and to make use of the mischief which they designed him as a means of promoting him to the greatest glory and grandeur he could ever have in this world. The like may be observed in many other both sacred and ecclesiastical histories: especially where the Church itself hath been concerned, which hath always grown and flourished most under the straits and troubles that have fallen upon it; which its enemies have designed for its destruction, but God hath still blessed and sanctified them to its greater increase and glory. Yea, there is no particular person that truly loves and honours God, but may take notice of the same in his own private affairs; even that all the losses, crosses, and disappointments that he ever suffered, all the distresses and afflictions of any sort that the devil or man have brought upon him, have, by the secret working of God, contributed something either to his temporal or spiritual good and welfare. This St. Paul observes and asserts, not only upon his own, but upon the knowledge and experience of all the saints, saying, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose⁴."

He that believes this, how can his heart be troubled at any thing? What, troubled for that which a man believes to be the will of God! Troubled for that which he believes is for his good! Troubled for that now, which he shall have cause to thank God for unto all eternity! It cannot be: no man can believe in God, and yet be troubled at the same time for what he doth; for our very believing that he doth it, and that he doth it for our good, must needs fill our hearts with so much joy and comfort, that there will be no room for grief or trouble there.

Wherefore, as ever we desire to keep our hearts from being tossed to and fro with the storms and tempests we meet with here below, we must be sure to

⁴ Rom. viii. 28.

keep our faith continually fixed upon God, according as our Saviour here directs us. But, for that purpose, as we believe in God, so we must believe in Christ too, for whose sake alone it is that God is thus good to us, as to make all things good for us; and therefore he adds, “believe also in me,” that so we may know from whence all our mercies flow, and how to obtain them,—even by believing and trusting on him who hath purchased them for us with his own blood, and who therefore never denies them to any that hope and trust on him for them.

Let us, therefore, now put our whole trust and confidence in Almighty God, and in our blessed Saviour, to protect us from all evil, and to give us whatsoever he knows to be good for us; and then we shall be sure that he will do it; for he never yet did, nor ever will, fail them that trust and depend upon him. Thus David asserts and promises in the name of God⁵; and Jehoshaphat experienced⁶, and Jeremiah the prophet⁷. Yea, this hath been the constant experience of all the saints that ever lived; and, therefore, let us but live as becometh saints, and trust in God, as they did; and we also shall find it true by our own experience, as they did. Whatsoever happens in the world, let our hearts be always fixed, trusting in the Lord; and then no trouble will come near them, but we shall always experience the certainty of that method which our Lord prescribes to keep our hearts from being troubled.

But there is another sort of trouble which Christ’s own disciples, real and true Christians, are apt to fall into,—even inward or spiritual troubles, arising from the remembrance of their former sins, from a sense of their present infirmities, from the strength of the devil’s temptations, or else from the consideration of the unworthiness and imperfection of their best duties. All which, I confess, are real causes of trouble, yea, of such trouble, as would certainly break our hearts in pieces,

⁵ Ps. xxxvii. 40; xxxiv. 22; cxxv. 1, 2.

⁶ 2 Chron. xx. 12.

⁷ Jer. xxxix. 17, 18.

if they were not defended by faith in Christ: but by faith in Christ our hearts may be defended even from such troubles as those, so that we shall be affected no further with them, than it is necessary we should be towards our exercise and growth in grace.

For, first, as to the remembrance of our former sins, it cannot, I confess, but be grievous to us, although we have now repented of them, and utterly forsaken them; for, do what we can, they will sometime come into our minds, and present themselves in all their dismal colours before our eyes, as we see in David, saying, "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me⁸." And in Job, saying to God, "For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth⁹." Though his sins were committed many years before, in his very youth, yet he still felt the bitterness of them, and his soul was filled with as much grief and sorrow for them, as if he had but newly committed, and had not as yet repented of them. Thus St. Paul, after he was become one of the greatest saints upon earth, still looked upon himself as the chiefest of all sinners, by reason of the many and horrid crimes he had been guilty of before his conversion, which being still fresh in his mind and memory, he could not but condemn and abhor himself for them as long as he lived.

I suppose there are many here present, who have found the same by their own experience, even all who are touched with so quick a sense of your former sins and follies, that you have truly repented of them. Do what you can, they will sometime come into your thoughts, and vex and grieve you to the heart; though they were committed twenty, or thirty, or forty years ago, it is all one, they still lie at the door of your consciences, ready upon all occasions to assault and trouble you, as much as if they had been committed but yesterday: they were once sweet to your taste, but now they are bitter to your souls. O, the gall and the worm-

⁸ Ps. li. 3.

⁹ Job xiii. 26.

wood, the grief and anguish you now feel, when you call to mind your former folly and madness in breaking so righteous a law, and in displeasing so great a God, and so gracious a Father, as you have done! How doth it cut you to the heart, that you should ever offend him, who gives you your very life and being, and all the good things you do enjoy: that you have been guilty of such crimes which nothing less than the blood of God could expiate; and have lived in those sins for which the best Friend you have in the world died! How are your hearts grieved, and your souls ready to be overwhelmed with horror and despair, at the remembrance of it, so as to say with David, "There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger," O Lord; "neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me¹!"

But, let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Jesus Christ. As ye remember what you have done, remember also what he hath suffered; what he hath suffered for those very sins which you remember you once committed: as verily as you believe yourselves to be guilty of such sins, believe likewise that Christ hath undergone all the shame, and pain, and punishment, which was due unto you for them: that he, by the one oblation of himself, made complete satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and for yours amongst the rest: that he was wounded for your transgressions, and bruised for your iniquities, that the chastisement of your peace was laid upon him, that by his stripes you might be healed²: that he was made sin for you, that you might be made the righteousness of God in him³: that he was delivered for your offences, and raised again for your justification⁴: that he loved you, and gave himself for you, and therefore calls upon you, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give

¹ Ps. xxxviii. 3, 4.

³ 2 Cor. v. 21.

² Isa. liii. 5.

⁴ Rom. iv. 25.

you rest⁵." You labour under the weight, you are heavy laden with the burden, of your sins; and if you do but go to Christ, by a quick and lively faith in him, he will ease you of your burden, and give rest and quiet to your souls: he will wash you from your iniquities, and cleanse you from your sins, in his own blood; and will say to you, as he did to the man in the Gospel, "Be of good comfort, my son, thy sins are all pardoned."

And verily this is not only the greatest, but the only effectual remedy in the world for a wounded conscience; insomuch that it is impossible for any one, who is truly sensible of his sins, to keep his heart from sinking down into despair at the remembrance of them, without a firm belief that the eternal Son of God hath suffered for them: and, therefore, St. John prescribes no other receipt in this case, but only this, saying, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world⁶." As if he had said, If any of you be guilty of some notorious sin, for which God may justly inflict the severest of his judgments upon you, yet do not despair of his mercy, but remember that we have an advocate always ready to plead our cause in heaven, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them: and he may well do it, having offered up himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of mankind in general, and for yours particularly; and, therefore, do but repent of what you have done, resolve to do so no more, but for the future according to the rules that he hath set you; and then you may and ought to believe in Christ for the pardon and forgiveness of all your former sins, so as to be fully persuaded in your minds that God for his sake hath, and will discharge and absolve you from all the guilt you had contracted by

⁵ Matt. xi. 28.

⁶ 1 John ii. 1, 2.

them, and is now as perfectly reconciled to you, as if he had never been displeased with you; and, therefore, let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Jesus Christ.

But you will say, perhaps, It is true, indeed, Christ being both God and man, his death could not but be of infinite value, and therefore a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all the world; but it is as true likewise, that none are actually pardoned by it, but only such as sincerely repent and turn to God, so as to avoid and mortify their sins, and walk for the future “in newness of life;” whereas, we find, by woful experience, that we have no power in ourselves at all to do it. We are not sufficient of ourselves so much as to think any thing as of ourselves, much less to do any thing that is good; but when we would do good, evil is present with us. Though we delight in the law of God after the inward man, we see another law in our members warring against the law of our minds, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin which is in our members⁷. By which means, though we set ourselves against our sins, we cannot overcome them, but are often overcome by them. Though we desire and endeavour to serve and obey God, according as he hath commanded us, we cannot do it; we strive to walk uprightly in his holy ways, but we are so very weak and infirm in our inward man, that, do what we can, we often stumble and fall; either doing what we ought not, or else not doing what we ought, at least not so as we ought to do it: how then can we expect that God should have mercy upon us, who are thus conscious to ourselves that we have not only sinned heretofore, but do so still? How can we expect pardon, even for Christ’s sake, when we are not able of ourselves to perform the conditions upon which it is promised? This is that which afflicts and confounds our souls, and fills them with unspeakable grief and horror, that God hath provided us such an all-sufficient Saviour, and yet we, by reason of the

⁷ Rom. vii. 21—23.

weakness of our depraved nature, cannot go unto him, nor come up to those easy terms, which he hath propounded in order to the pardon of our sins by the merits of his death and passion. This is that which makes us cry out in the bitterness of our souls, as St. Paul did, "O wretched men that we are! who shall deliver us from the body of this death that is within us⁸?"

But let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Christ, who is able not only to pardon your sins when ye have repented, but to give you repentance too, that so they may be pardoned. For he is exalted with the right hand of God "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins⁹." They are both now at his disposal: repentance, as he is a Prince; and forgiveness, as he is a Saviour. As he is a Saviour, he can save us from the wrath of God which is due unto our sins, and so forgive them, so soon as we have repented of them. As he is a Prince, that hath all power committed to him both in heaven and earth, he can enable us to repent so as that our sins may be forgiven. What, then, if ye can do nothing of yourselves, what is there ye may not do by his assistance who can do all things; and who is always ready to enable you to do whatsoever is required of you, if ye do but believe and depend upon him for it; insomuch that by the continual exercise of your faith in him you may continually derive that grace and virtue from him, whereby you may be enabled, not only to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, but likewise to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, and so both learn and practise all that the gospel teaches and requires of you in order to your pardon¹? This St. Paul found by experience, and therefore confidently asserts it, saying, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things

⁸ Rom. vii. 24.

⁹ Acts v. 31.

¹ Tit. ii. 12.

I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me²." And if you do but believe in Christ, as St. Paul did, you may have the same experience as he had, so as to be able to say, that, though you can do nothing without Christ, there is nothing but you can do by him: by him you may overcome the world; by him you may mortify all your earthly members; by him you may "work out your salvation with fear and trembling;" by him you may "make your calling and election sure;" by him you may walk in all the "commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." And, therefore, let not your hearts be troubled at the consideration of your natural infirmities, but believe in Christ, apply yourselves to him, and he will soon afford you such assistances of his own grace and Holy Spirit whereby your hearts shall be set to obey God's commandments, and to do all such good works as he hath prepared for you to walk in, notwithstanding your own natural corruptions, or the temptations of the devil himself. I say, notwithstanding the temptations of the devil himself, which are often very strong and violent; for he, being cast out of heaven, "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour³." And if he can delight in any thing, it is in doing mischief wheresoever he comes, to mankind, and in bringing them, if it be possible, into the same estate of misery and torment with himself; for which purpose, being full of subtilty as well as malice, he takes particular notice of every one's temper, his condition, and the several circumstances of his life, and suits his temptations accordingly. So long as men go on in their sins, he lets them alone, as being hitherto sure of them; but when he sees them once begin to look towards heaven, and endeavour to obtain that happiness which he hath lost, then he bestirs himself, and sets with all his might and main upon them, striving all he can to bring them back

² Phil. iv. 11—13.³ 1 Pet. v. 8.

into their former sins, or else to seduce them into some damnable heresy, or else into some superstitious way of living; that so they may take up with the shadow instead of the substance of religion. And if none of these things will do, but he sees them still resolved to live in the true faith and fear of God, and so walk directly in the way to bliss, then he endeavours to obstruct, or, at least, disturb, them in their course: he works upon the humours of their bodies, whereby to affect their minds; he raiseth mists before their eyes, that they may not look upon things in their proper colours; he corrupts their fancies, so as to make all things seem black and melancholy to them; he interrupts and distracts them in their duties; he suggests sometimes unclean, sometimes profane, sometimes blasphemous and atheistical thoughts into their minds; and all to make their lives useless and unserviceable to God, or, at least, uneasy and uncomfortable to themselves; as many here present, I believe, have found by their woful experience, by which means you are always full of fears and doubts about your spiritual estate, and are so mightily troubled and discomposed in your minds, that you expect every day to be overcome by this your potent and malicious adversary, and to be carried captive by him at his will.

But let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Jesus Christ, who is infinitely more above the devil in knowledge and power, than you are below him: do but believe and trust on him; and the "gates of hell shall never prevail against you;" but, whatsoever temptations fall upon you, he will make way for your escape. This we learn from his own mouth, where he saith to St. Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren⁴." From whence we may observe, that the devil could do St. Peter no hurt,

⁴ Luke xxii. 31, 32.

unless his faith failed; that our Lord had taken care that his faith should not fail, and, by consequence, that the devil should no way hurt him; as he afterwards found by experience: and, therefore, the same apostle directs all Christians to take the same course whensoever they are tempted; for, having acquainted them that the devil goes about “seeking whom he may devour,” he adds, “Whom resist stedfast in the faith⁵.” Implying that, so long as they continued stedfast in the faith of Christ, all the power of hell could never prevail against them: and that is the reason why St. Paul calls it “the shield of faith,” because by it we are “able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked⁶.”

Now that faith, which is thus prevalent against the devil, is not only a belief that the gospel is true in general, but a firm trust and confidence in our blessed Saviour to save and defend us from our ‘ghostly enemies;’ which he will certainly do, if we thus believe in him, and apply ourselves to him to do it for us: as we see in that remarkable instance of St. Paul, who, when he was buffeted by a messenger of Satan, “For this thing,” saith he, “I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness⁷.” Where we may observe how ready our Lord was to assist him: and that he did it most effectually, appears from the following words, where the apostle saith, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” He was so far from sinking under the sense of his infirmities, that he gloried in them, as being the occasion of his receiving more power from Christ than he could ever have had from himself in his best estate.

And none of you but may find the same by your own experience, if you will but take the same course. Whensoever you are assaulted with any sort of temptations whatsoever, be not disheartened at them; let

⁵ 1 Pet. v. 9.

⁶ Eph. vi. 16.

⁷ 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

not your hearts be troubled, but believe in Christ; act your trust and confidence on him, and he will soon either make the tempter to flee from you, or else put such power into you, whereby you shall be able not only to withstand his temptations, but receive extraordinary benefit and comfort for them, so as to turn them into matter of glory and triumph. But, by reason of the infirmity of your nature, the relics of sin within you, and the manifold temptations you meet with in the world, you find, by sad experience, that notwithstanding the assistance you receive from God's grace and Holy Spirit, yet you cannot exactly observe every punctilio of the moral law, nor so much as do any one good work so perfectly as that law requires; but, do what you can, there is so much imperfection, so many defects in the best work you do, that it cannot in itself be termed good, nor, by consequence, acceptable unto God, as not corresponding in every point with his commands. And this is that which troubles you more than all the rest,—that, when you have done what you can, you still come short of what you ought to do; and God may justly be displeased with you for the best, as well as for the worst actions of your whole life.

It is very true; yet, howsoever, "let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Jesus Christ," who hath taken care of this, as well as of any thing else that concerns your salvation by him; for he having performed not only perfect, but divine obedience to the whole law in our nature, God is pleased to overlook the defects of our obedience, and for his sake to accept of it, if it be but sincere, as well as if it was absolutely perfect. This we learn, as from the whole design and tenor of the gospel, so particularly from that remarkable passage of St. Peter, where, speaking to all Christians, he saith, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ^s." From whence it is plain that, al-

^s 1 Pet. ii. 5.

though our sacrifices, or good works, be lame and imperfect, yet, if they be but spiritual and sincere, they are acceptable to God, not in themselves, but by Jesus Christ; by which means God “makes us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ⁹.” And, therefore, whether you pray, or praise God, or hear his holy word, or receive his blessed Sacrament, or give an alms to the poor, or whatsoever you do in obedience to God’s commands, do but sincerely endeavour to do it as well as you can, and trust on Christ for God’s acceptance of it; and then you may be confident that he will accept of it, and be as well pleased with it, as if it was every way as perfect as it ought to be; which is certainly a matter of as great joy to a sincere Christian as any one thing besides in the whole gospel.

Now, from these things, thus put together, ye may easily see both the certainty and universality of the means which our Saviour here prescribes for the keeping our hearts from being troubled, which, therefore, we ought to use upon all occasions: but lest any of you should neglect or not use it aright, give me leave to apply it to you all. You have all, I dare say, your troubles of one sort or other. Now, of what kind soever they are, apprehend our blessed Saviour as present with you, as he really is, and that you hear him repeating these words to you, as he really doth by the mouth of his unworthy servant, saying, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” Do ye meet with many crosses and disappointments in the world? Are your bodies sick or weak; your fortunes low; and your hopes of ever mending them little, or none at all; are your children undutiful, your relations unkind, and your enemies powerful and malicious? “Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me,” and I will so order it that all these things shall work together for your good.

⁹ Heb. xiii. 21.

Are you apprehensive of any public calamities that may befall the Church or kingdom in which you live, or of any private adversity that may happen to yourselves or families? Are you in danger of losing your estates, your liberty, your life, or that which is dearer to you,—your good name and reputation in the world? “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me;” and I will take care, as of my Church in general, so of every true member of it, that none of them who trust on me may be confounded. Are ye sensible of the greatness of your sins, the weakness of your graces, the strength of the devil’s temptations, or the imperfection of your own duties and good works? It is well ye are so: howsoever, “let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself,” &c. “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.”

SERMON XV.

THE NEW CREATION.

EPH. ii. 10.

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

THE apostle in this chapter gives us a plain description of the state of nature, and the state of grace: what sort of people we are, as we proceed from the first Adam; and what we are made, when we are engrafted into the second. He first puts the Ephesians in mind how they had been dead in trespasses and sins, and that not only they, but we also, we the disciples of Christ, we are all “by nature the children of wrath, even as others¹.” The children of wrath, because the children of disobedience, walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, and so directly contrary to the laws of God; who is, therefore, justly displeased with us, and hath passed the sentence of death, even of eternal death, upon all; and will most certainly execute it upon every one that goes out of this world no better than he came into it.

But, then, on the other side, the apostle saith, that “when we were dead in sins, God hath quickened us

¹ Eph. ii. 3.

together with Christ, and hath raised us up together²." He hath raised us up to a new and spiritual life, that we may not only escape the death to which we were before condemned, but "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," and so enjoy everlasting life and happiness.

But this the apostle ascribes wholly to the grace of God. "For," saith he, "by grace ye are saved through faith³." By grace on God's part, and through faith on ours; through faith in Christ as the way whereby we come to be interested in his merits and mediation. And "that," too, is "not of ourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works," not of any thing which we ourselves can do, either to effect or to deserve it, "lest any man should boast⁴:" but that God may have all the glory.

Now for the further illustration and proof of this great doctrine here delivered by the apostle, he adds these remarkable words, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." In which few words, rightly understood, there are many things much to be observed by all that concern themselves in good earnest about their future state; and therefore I shall endeavour to explain them in the same order wherein they lie.

The apostle, therefore, to shew that the great change, that is made in us when we are brought out of the state of nature into that of grace, is wrought in us wholly and solely by God himself, first observes, in general, that "we are his workmanship," not only as men, but as Christians; not only as creatures, but as new creatures; we are made such also by him, by whom we were at first made; whatsoever means or instruments may be used in bringing it about, he is the efficient cause, he is the principal agent. Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but it is God that giveth the increase⁵. So that the whole new man also, with every part of it, is his workmanship.

² Eph. ii. 5, 6.

⁴ Ver. 8, 9.

³ Ver. 8.

⁵ 1 Cor. iii. 6.

It is his workmanship as much as the creation of the world was; for, as the apostle here adds, "We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Here, it seems, a new creation, or production of something out of nothing, though not of matter and substance, yet of qualities and endowments: piety and virtue being made to spring up where there was no such thing before, nothing like it, but rather the quite contrary; and therefore David prayed that God would "create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him⁶." He had an heart before; but it could not be a clean heart, unless it was created again. He had a spirit before; but that spirit must be renewed before it could be a right spirit,—right in the sight of God, and set to obey his commandments.

But, to distinguish this from the first creation, the apostle here saith, that we "are created in Christ Jesus;" and elsewhere, that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature⁷," as the words there signify; and "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature⁸." It is still in Christ that this creation is effected, or the new creature made. This is the great mystery of godliness that is revealed in the Gospel; out of which I shall, therefore, endeavour to set it in such a light, that we may all see what to believe concerning it, and what to do, that we may be eternally the better for it.

For which purpose, we may first observe, that this Jesus Christ being both God and man in one Person; as God, he was neither made nor created; but, as man, he was "made of a woman⁹," and created immediately by God himself, according to that of the prophet, "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man¹." "The man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts²." "One who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God³;" and yet, nevertheless, "took upon him the

⁶ Ps. li. 10.

⁹ Gal. iv. 4.

⁷ Gal. vi. 15.

¹ Jer. xxxi. 22.

³ Phil. ii. 6.

⁸ 2 Cor. v. 17.

² Zech. xiii. 7.

form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men⁴." He was made so by the immediate act of God himself, as the first man was; for as the Lord God formed Adam of the dust of the ground⁵, so he formed Christ of the flesh or substance of the Virgin; to whom the angel said, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God⁶." Where we see that Jesus Christ, who was to be born, is not called only an holy God, or holy man, but "that holy thing," a thing, made up of God and man together; such a thing as never was before, any otherwise than in the decree and promise of God; but now it began actually to exist by the power of the Highest. It was by that, that the manhood was both formed and united to the Divine Person. And so, in both respects, that holy thing, Christ Jesus, was the workmanship of God, created, as the first man was, by his almighty power.

And as the first man was not only a single human person, but one in whom all mankind was then contained, and, therefore, had no proper name given him, but was called Adam, that is, man,—man in general; so Christ took not on him the nature of one or more particular human persons, but the whole human nature,—the nature of man in general. And, therefore, although there were millions of human persons between the first man and him, yet the man Christ Jesus is called "the second man⁷." The second that was man in general, as the first was; and for the same reason he is called also "the last Adam⁸," because the whole nature of man was in him, as well as it was in the first Adam. And that, too, with this mighty advantage, that it was in the first only as in a finite human person, but in the last in a Person that is infinite and divine, so as to make but one person with him; for that which was formed of the substance of the blessed Virgin never subsisting of itself, but being from its first conception

⁴ Phil. ii. 7.

⁵ Gen. ii. 7.

⁶ Luke i. 35.

⁷ 1 Cor. xv. 47.

⁸ Ver. 45.

united to the Godhead, could not make a person of itself distinct from the divine; but as 'the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ; one, not by conversion of the Godhead into the flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God.'

Now the manhood in general, or whole human nature, being thus in God our Saviour, whatsoever he did or suffered as man, was done and suffered by the whole nature of man; and it being done and suffered in an infinite Person, it could not but be of infinite worth and merit for those who are of that nature. Hence it is, that as our whole nature was corrupted in the first man, it is cleansed and sanctified in the second; "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive⁹." "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous¹." And as in Adam we fell from the happy estate in which we were created, so we were restored to it by being created again in Christ Jesus.

But that we may be so, as we come by nature from the first Adam, we must come to the last by faith; that is, we must believe and trust on him for it, according to the revelations that God hath given us, and the promises which he hath made us in him; that being the way that God himself hath appointed in his holy word whereby to come to Christ, so as to have all that he did and suffered in our common nature applied to our own particular persons; as appears from the whole design and tenour of the Gospel, where faith is all along required in order to our obtaining any of the blessings that he hath merited for us; insomuch that they who do not believe have no part or portion in him, no more than as if he had never been made man, but are still in their natural state, just as they proceeded from the first Adam; whereas they who truly believe are taken out of the first, and grafted into the second, so as to be made branches of him, the true

⁹ 1 Cor. xv. 22.

¹ Rom. v. 19.

vine; members of that body, whereof Christ himself is head. And being in him, they partake of all the merits of the death he suffered, and of all that he ever did, or is now doing, in their nature: in him they have pardon and peace; in him they have righteousness and strength; in him they are made new creatures, for they are "created in Christ."

¹² They are created much after the same manner as all things were at first; for as all things were at first created by the word of God, so are they by the Word made flesh, and by the Word made known unto them; for they are created, or "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever²." There is only this difference,—that whereas, in the first creation of all things, there being nothing to believe or disbelieve his Word, "God only commanded, and they were created³." But in this new creation, men being before made, and made free agents, capable of believing or not believing what is said, "The Word worketh effectually only in them who believe⁴." And that is the reason that none but they who believe, are created in Christ Jesus; but all that do so are.

Again, when God in the beginning had created the heavens and the earth, it is said, that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters⁵." So that by "the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath, or Spirit, of his mouth⁶." He first by his Word raised the heavens out of nothing, giving them a being or existence in general; then by his Spirit he made all the hosts of them, that is, all things wherewith they were to be furnished and adorned, bringing them all into their proper place and order, that every thing might be, and act, and move, as he designed it should; so here, when any are created in Christ Jesus, his Spirit moves upon their souls, and reduces all their powers and faculties into a

² 1 Pet. i. 23.

³ Ps. cxlviii. 5.

⁴ 1 Thess. ii. 13.

⁵ Gen. i. 2.

⁶ Ps. xxxiii. 6.

right order and disposition again, “so as to quicken⁷,” “renew⁸,” “regenerate⁹,” and make them another sort of creatures than they were before: before they were natural, now supernatural; before carnal, now spiritual creatures; “For that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit¹.” As they were at first born, they were all flesh; by this new birth, they are all over spirit, of the same pure and spiritual nature with Him of whom they are born again; and, therefore, as before “they were the offspring of Adam, they are now made the children of God².” “And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ³,” in whom they are thus created. Such a wonderful change is wrought in those who are created in Christ Jesus, in all respects as much to be admired as the first creation of all things out of nothing!

Moreover, as, in the first creation, the first particular thing that God made was “light⁴,” so it is in this new creation. Before God made light, it is said, “that darkness was upon the face of the abyss, or deep⁵.” And so it is in this case,—darkness is upon the face of all mankind by nature; the worst sort of darkness, even spiritual darkness, covers them all over; so that although they have eyes to see other things, they cannot see the things that belong to their everlasting peace, nor discern so much as the true difference between good and evil; much less can they see God, though his glory shines continually about them, no more than a man that is stark blind can see the sun at noon-day. And as for the gospel of Christ, they are so far from seeing anything of that, that they laugh at those who profess to see any thing in it, as the apostle observes, “The preaching of Christ crucified is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness⁶.” And all because the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, “For they are

⁷ John vi. 63.

¹ John iii. 6.

⁴ Gen. i. 3.

⁸ Tit. iii. 5.

² Rom. viii. 14.

⁵ Ib. ver. 2.

⁹ John iii. 5.

³ Ib. ver. 17.

⁶ 1 Cor. i. 23.

foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned⁷."

There are many such natural men in the world; indeed, the far greatest part of men are such: but the condition of all such is very sad and deplorable; for however they may flatter themselves at present, they will find the apostle's words to be true, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them⁸." If they believed, the god of this world could have no power over them: but seeing they will not believe, he carrieth them captive at his will, keeps them in the dark, and leads them blindfold to the place allotted for unbelievers. Neither is it possible to be avoided without having their eyes opened: they must first be turned from darkness to light, before they can be turned from the power of Satan unto God⁹. But "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in the hearts" of those who are created anew, "to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ¹," "who is the Light of the world²," "the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world³." So that no man ever had, or can have, any light but from him. Who, therefore, saith, that he "came a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not abide in darkness⁴;" and, therefore, all who believe, and so are created in him, are so far from abiding any longer in darkness, that they are immediately enlightened by him with such a light, whereby they both see and feel the wondrous things of his law and gospel, and all things relating to their eternal happiness and salvation, which lie hid to all other mortals; for he, the Sun of righteousness, shines not only about them and upon them, but in them; spreading his bright beams all over their hearts,

⁷ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

⁸ 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

² John viii. 12.

⁴ John xii. 26.

⁹ Acts xxvi. 18.

³ John i. 9.

so as not only to open the eyes of their understanding, but to fill their whole souls with so clear a sight, and so quick a sense of what he would have them to believe and do, that their wills also are inclined to it. There is no need of any force; for when they so plainly see it to be for their own benefit and advantage, they cannot but of their own accord choose to believe and live as he would have them. This is that “marvellous light” to which they are called, “who are created in Jesus Christ ⁵.”

Passing over the other parts of the creation, let us in the next place consider how man himself was at first made. God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ⁶.” Here we see several Persons were pleased to manifest themselves as concerned and agreeing in making man, which could be no other than those who are before mentioned, or implied in the rest of the creation, even God himself ⁷, “the Spirit of God ⁸,” and the Word ⁹, “by whom all things were made ¹.” So it was when the second man was made. “The Word was then made flesh ².” He was made so by the Spirit of God coming upon the blessed Virgin, and by the power of the Highest overshadowing her; and was therefore “called the Son of God ³,” even of God the Father. And so it is also when any particular men are created in Christ Jesus. They are created by the Father, the Creator of all things: he creates them in his Son, Christ, and by his Spirit moving upon them, as we before shewed.

But that which is chiefly to be observed in our present case is, “that God created man in his own image, after his own likeness,” as like unto himself as it was possible for such a creature to be made in knowledge, holiness, and power over all earthly creatures. And, as the first man was made in the image of God, so the second, even Jesus Christ, “He is the image of

⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

⁶ Gen. i. 26.

⁷ Ver. 1.

⁸ Ver. 2.

⁹ Ver. 3.

¹ John i. 3. Eph. iii. 9. Col. i. 16.

² John i. 14.

³ Luke i. 35.

God⁴,” “the express image of his person⁵,” and when any are created in him, they are said “to put on Christ,” and so “the image of God⁶,” “and to put on the new man, which after God,” or according to his likeness, “is created in righteousness and true holiness⁷,” “and renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him⁸,” and therefore all such “partake of the divine nature⁹,” even of the holiness of God, which is his nature¹⁰, being made “holy, as he who hath called them is holy in all manner of conversation¹¹.”

From these things, thus briefly touched upon, we may see how truly they who believe as the gospel requires are here said to be created in Christ Jesus, what excellent creatures they are made, and how far they exceed all other men, and themselves, too, before they were so created. Before, their whole souls were disordered and out of tune: now they are restored to a right frame and temper again; they have a right understanding and judgment in all necessary things. They always exercise themselves to keep their consciences void of offence towards God and men. They look upon all things in the world as nothing in comparison of him that made them; and, therefore, they love him with all their hearts, they put their whole trust and confidence in him, they fear nothing but him, they rejoice continually in him, and account it their only pleasure to please him, and their greatest honour to honour him. It grieves them to the heart to see his holy name dishonoured, or his service slighted; and if they themselves ever happen to omit their daily prayers, or any duty which they owe to him, they are restless and uneasy until they return to it; for, their minds being wholly bent upon doing what he whose image they bear would have them, whatsoever draws them aside, goes against the grain; they set the Lord God Almighty always before them, and therefore are

⁴ 2 Cor. iv. 4. Col. i. 15.

⁶ Rom. xiii. 14. Gal. iii. 27.

⁸ Col. iii. 10.

⁹ 2 Pet. i. 4.

¹¹ 1 Pet. i. 15.

⁵ Heb. i. 3.

⁷ Eph. iv. 24.

¹⁰ Heb. xii. 10.

always humble and lowly in their own eyes, and meek, patient, and submissive to his divine will: in short, the law of God being written again in their hearts, their whole nature is changed; insomuch that, as all things naturally tend to their proper end, so do they to that for which they are created.

What that is, the apostle here teacheth, saying, "That we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works;" we are not created to sit still and do nothing, much less to do ill; but to do good works; that is the end of the second creation, as it was of the first. At first, "the Lord made all things for himself¹," even to shew forth the glory of his infinite wisdom, power, goodness, and such other perfections as could be exerted in the contrivance, production, and establishment of the world, and all things in it: but here are two of his divine perfections, even "grace," or "mercy" and "truth," for which there was yet no occasion, or object; but when man was fallen, he was pleased to manifest them, by redeeming or creating him again in Christ Jesus. By whom it is therefore said, that "grace and truth came," or appeared, "in the world²." Grace, in the many promises which he hath made to fallen man; and his truth, in the faithful performance of the same.

Now this will give us great light into what we are to understand by the "good works," unto which we are "created in Christ Jesus." Not that divine temper of mind, or those excellent qualities and virtues, wherewith such are inwardly endued; but such overt acts which proceed from them to the honour and glory of our Almighty Creator. This we learn from our Lord's own words to his disciples, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven³." For from hence it appears that, although we are not to do good works therefore only that men may see them, and so make that our end in doing them, yet, that our works

¹ Prov. xvi. 4.

² John i. 17.

³ Matt. v. 16.

may be good, they must be such as men may see, and glorify God for them; according to that of his apostle also to all Christians, "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation⁴." They should be such works as men may behold, and praise and glorify God for giving such power to men, that they, who of themselves can do nothing but sin, should be enabled by him to do good; which is much for the glory of his grace and truth revealed in the gospel of Christ; and the great end wherefore any are created in him, even "to shew forth the praises," or "virtues, of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light⁵." And, therefore, as all such are to aim at "the glory of God" in all their works, without which they cannot be good⁶, so they must strive all they can to do such works as may really tend to his glory, as ever they desire to answer the end of their creation, by doing good works.

To make this more plain, it will be necessary to instance in some of those works which are truly good, and therefore commanded, because of their tendency to the ultimate end of all things,—even the glory of our almighty Creator and most merciful Saviour;—as, for example, to make open and public profession to the world of our faith in God and our Saviour, according to the revelations which he hath made of himself, and his will, to mankind in the Holy Scripture given by his inspiration; to testify and confirm that our profession by our constant attendance at his public worship, to adore and pray to him, and him alone, for what we want, and to praise his holy name for the wondrous works that he hath done and still doth in the world; to frequent that holy Sacrament which he hath ordained in memory of the death he suffered in our

⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 12.⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 9.⁶ 1 Cor. x. 31.

nature, and for our salvation; to vindicate and defend his Church, wherein alone he is truly served and glorified, against all its enemies, that, according to his promise, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it;" to do what we can that his name may be known, and his gospel propagated, all the world over; that all kings may fall down before him, and all nations serve him; to erect, support, endow, and adorn, places where he may be duly and devoutly worshipped, and to see that his worship be accordingly performed by all that we have any power over, especially by ourselves; to instruct young and ignorant people in the principles of the Christian religion, "that they may know the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," and what he would have them to believe and do, that they may serve him and be happy; to instruct those, also, in meekness, who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; to reprove and rebuke such as blaspheme, or profane, God's holy name, or dishonour his gospel by any lewd and immoral practices; to use all means to bring them to a sense of their sin, and so turn them to righteousness and true holiness; to administer justice truly and indifferently, 'to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of God's true religion and virtue;' to compose any differences that arise in Church or State, or between private persons; and so make peace; 'to succour, help, and comfort, such as are in danger, necessity, or any tribulation; to defend and provide for the fatherless children and widows, the sick and needy, desolate or oppressed,'—and all for his sake, who hath promised to take care of such; to be true and just in all our dealings with men, that they may see we prefer our duty before any worldly interest; to choose resolutely to suffer the loss of all we have, even of life itself, rather than do any thing whereby we may seem to deny God, dishonour his holy name, or wilfully break his laws: these, and such like, which appear at first sight to tend to the honour and glory of

the most high God, are the good works unto which we are created in Christ Jesus, and which we are, therefore, all bound to do, according to our several abilities.

Which I therefore add, because it is implied in the following words of my text; the apostle here saying, that we are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained,” or, as the word signifies, “prepared, that we should walk in them.” For as he hath prepared us to walk in good works, so he hath prepared good works for us to walk in. They, who are created in Christ Jesus, are thereby restored to a sound mind, and every way qualified and disposed to do what their Creator would have them. They are enlightened, renewed, sanctified, and led, by his good Spirit; and, therefore, as naturally do good works, as a good tree bringeth forth good fruit. But as every good tree bringeth forth its own proper fruit,—such as God designed it should when he made it; so every one that is created in Christ Jesus doth such good works as He hath fore-ordained, or prepared, for them to do. None of them can do all; but every one doth all he can in that place and state of life in which God is pleased for that purpose to set him. Some he advanceth to an higher degree, to greater authority and larger estates, than others; and for them he, therefore, hath prepared greater and more good works to do, than for those which he confines to a lower rank and narrower circumstances. But there is no condition that a man can be in, be it never so mean, but he hath some good works or other prepared for him, which he may do if he will; and will, too, if he be created in Christ Jesus. Otherwise he may conclude himself not to be created in him. He, in the parable, that had but “one talent,” was bound to improve that one, as he who had “five” improved all his five for his master’s use: and because he did it not, he was judged to be a wicked and slothful servant, and punished accordingly⁷.

Wherefore it highly concerns us who believe in God,

⁷ Matt. xxi. 30.

always humble and lowly in their own eyes, and meek, patient, and submissive to his divine will: in short, the law of God being written again in their hearts, their whole nature is changed; insomuch that, as all things naturally tend to their proper end, so do they to that for which they are created.

What that is, the apostle here teacheth, saying, "That we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works;" we are not created to sit still and do nothing, much less to do ill; but to do good works; that is the end of the second creation, as it was of the first. At first, "the Lord made all things for himself¹," even to shew forth the glory of his infinite wisdom, power, goodness, and such other perfections as could be exerted in the contrivance, production, and establishment of the world, and all things in it: but here are two of his divine perfections, even "grace," or "mercy" and "truth," for which there was yet no occasion, or object; but when man was fallen, he was pleased to manifest them, by redeeming or creating him again in Christ Jesus. By whom it is therefore said, that "grace and truth came," or appeared, "in the world²." Grace, in the many promises which he hath made to fallen man; and his truth, in the faithful performance of the same.

Now this will give us great light into what we are to understand by the "good works," unto which we are "created in Christ Jesus." Not that divine temper of mind, or those excellent qualities and virtues, wherewith such are inwardly endued; but such overt acts which proceed from them to the honour and glory of our Almighty Creator. This we learn from our Lord's own words to his disciples, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven³." For from hence it appears that, although we are not to do good works therefore only that men may see them, and so make that our end in doing them, yet, that our works

¹ Prov. xvi. 4.

² John i. 17.

³ Matt. v. 16.

may be good, they must be such as men may see, and glorify God for them; according to that of his apostle also to all Christians, "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation⁴." They should be such works as men may behold, and praise and glorify God for giving such power to men, that they, who of themselves can do nothing but sin, should be enabled by him to do good; which is much for the glory of his grace and truth revealed in the gospel of Christ; and the great end wherefore any are created in him, even "to shew forth the praises," or "virtues, of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light⁵." And, therefore, as all such are to aim at "the glory of God" in all their works, without which they cannot be good⁶, so they must strive all they can to do such works as may really tend to his glory, as ever they desire to answer the end of their creation, by doing good works.

To make this more plain, it will be necessary to instance in some of those works which are truly good, and therefore commanded, because of their tendency to the ultimate end of all things,—even the glory of our almighty Creator and most merciful Saviour;—as, for example, to make open and public profession to the world of our faith in God and our Saviour, according to the revelations which he hath made of himself, and his will, to mankind in the Holy Scripture given by his inspiration; to testify and confirm that our profession by our constant attendance at his public worship, to adore and pray to him, and him alone, for what we want, and to praise his holy name for the wondrous works that he hath done and still doth in the world; to frequent that holy Sacrament which he hath ordained in memory of the death he suffered in our

⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 12.⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 9.⁶ 1 Cor. x. 31.

nature, and for our salvation ; to vindicate and defend his Church, wherein alone he is truly served and glorified, against all its enemies, that, according to his promise, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it;" to do what we can that his name may be known, and his gospel propagated, all the world over ; that all kings may fall down before him, and all nations serve him ; to erect, support, endow, and adorn, places where he may be duly and devoutly worshipped, and to see that his worship be accordingly performed by all that we have any power over, especially by ourselves ; to instruct young and ignorant people in the principles of the Christian religion, "that they may know the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," and what he would have them to believe and do, that they may serve him and be happy ; to instruct those, also, in meekness, who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth ; to reprove and rebuke such as blaspheme, or profane, God's holy name, or dishonour his gospel by any lewd and immoral practices ; to use all means to bring them to a sense of their sin, and so turn them to righteousness and true holiness ; to administer justice truly and indifferently, 'to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of God's true religion and virtue ;' to compose any differences that arise in Church or State, or between private persons ; and so make peace ; 'to succour, help, and comfort, such as are in danger, necessity, or any tribulation ; to defend and provide for the fatherless children and widows, the sick and needy, desolate or oppressed,'—and all for his sake, who hath promised to take care of such ; to be true and just in all our dealings with men, that they may see we prefer our duty before any worldly interest ; to choose resolutely to suffer the loss of all we have, even of life itself, rather than do any thing whereby we may seem to deny God, dishonour his holy name, or wilfully break his laws : these, and such like, which appear at first sight to tend to the honour and glory of

the most high God, are the good works unto which we are created in Christ Jesus, and which we are, therefore, all bound to do, according to our several abilities.

Which I therefore add, because it is implied in the following words of my text; the apostle here saying, that we are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained," or, as the word signifies, "prepared, that we should walk in them." For as he hath prepared us to walk in good works, so he hath prepared good works for us to walk in. They, who are created in Christ Jesus, are thereby restored to a sound mind, and every way qualified and disposed to do what their Creator would have them. They are enlightened, renewed, sanctified, and led, by his good Spirit; and, therefore, as naturally do good works, as a good tree bringeth forth good fruit. But as every good tree bringeth forth its own proper fruit,—such as God designed it should when he made it; so every one that is created in Christ Jesus doth such good works as He hath fore-ordained, or prepared, for them to do. None of them can do all; but every one doth all he can in that place and state of life in which God is pleased for that purpose to set him. Some he advanceth to an higher degree, to greater authority and larger estates, than others; and for them he, therefore, hath prepared greater and more good works to do, than for those which he confines to a lower rank and narrower circumstances. But there is no condition that a man can be in, be it never so mean, but he hath some good works or other prepared for him, which he may do if he will; and will, too, if he be created in Christ Jesus. Otherwise he may conclude himself not to be created in him. He, in the parable, that had but "one talent," was bound to improve that one, as he who had "five" improved all his five for his master's use: and because he did it not, he was judged to be a wicked and slothful servant, and punished accordingly⁷.

Wherefore it highly concerns us who believe in God,

⁷ Matt. xxi. 30.

to "be careful to maintain good works⁸." Not only some few, but all which God hath prepared that we should walk in them. Not only do them now and then, by the by, but walk in them through the whole course of our life, keeping always as close as we can to the steps of our great Master, "who went about doing good⁹." So should we who profess ourselves to be his disciples, and created in him unto good works: we should be always doing, or at least contriving how to do, good in the world; that we may not live in vain and to no purpose, as most people do, but to the great end for which we were created.

I am very sensible that we can never set about any good work, especially if it be more than ordinary, but we shall meet with many rubs and difficulties in the way, raised by the common adversary of mankind, or such as he employs to hinder all good, and carry on his wicked designs. But we must not regard that, but still go on, trusting and depending upon Him, who sets us on work, to carry us through it. "We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us¹." As it is in him that we are created unto good works, in him we have strength to do all that he requires of us, who requires no more than what we can do by his assistance. And "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, not according to that he hath not²." It is accepted, not for any worth, or merit, in what we do, but through him by whom we do it, who doth not only supply us with grace to obey the will of God, as far as is required in this our imperfect state, but makes up the defects of our obedience with the merits of his own. For he having in our nature been obedient through the whole course of his life unto death, as God is pleased to accept of his death instead of ours, so he accepts of our obedience for the sake of his, whatsoever is wanting in our persons being abundantly supplied by the infinite merits

⁸ Tit. iii. 8.

¹ Phil. iv. 13.

⁹ Acts x. 38.

² 2 Cor. viii. 12.

of what he did and suffered in our nature. And hence it is, that they "who are created in Christ Jesus unto good works" really do the good works unto which they are created. For though the works they do be not perfectly in themselves good, yet God is pleased to look upon them as good through him in whom they are created; otherwise they could not be called "good works," as they are in this and many other places of Holy Scripture. Wherein we are also assured, that all the spiritual sacrifices we offer, all the good works we do, although in themselves imperfect, yet are "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ³;" which, therefore, that ours may be, whensoever we have done any good work, we must lift our hearts to Christ in heaven, and trust on him to perfume it with the incense of his merits, and then we need not doubt but God will be well pleased with it.

The premisses being thus briefly laid down, it is easy to observe, that, as none can do good works, but they who are "created in Christ Jesus;" so to manifest ourselves to be created in him, it is absolutely necessary that we do all the good works we can in our several vocations and callings; and that they who do so are the most happy persons upon earth, whatsoever their outward condition may be, and howsoever other people may say or think of them. For they do the will of God upon earth, as it is done in heaven: they shine as lights in the world: they have the honour to honour God, and to be honoured by him⁴. They have the pleasure of pleasing him that governs the whole world, who therefore takes them into his own particular care and protection; makes their enemies "to be at peace with them⁵;" supplies them with all things necessary both for life and godliness; directs and prospers them in all their undertakings; makes all things work together for their good while they live, and then saith to every one of them, "Well done, good

³ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

⁴ 1 Sam. ii. 30.

⁵ Prov. xvi. 7.

and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever⁶."

⁶ Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

SERMON XVI.

THE ADVANTAGES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

Ps. cxxii. 1.

“ I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.”

“ THUS saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest¹?” Whereby it hath pleased his divine goodness to signify to us, that he lives and reigns on high, infinitely above all that we can think; and that the earth is at his foot, to do what he will with it, and with every thing that is in it, or upon it. So that the whole earth is full of his glory, and the heaven of heavens is not able to contain it. Where, then, shall we build an house, where shall we find a place for him, to dwell in? No where, certainly, so as that he should be included in it. Yet, nevertheless, as he is said to dwell in heaven, because he there unveils himself, and shines forth in all his glory, before those pure and holy creatures that dwell there, and are capable of beholding it; so he is said to dwell in such places upon earth, too, where he is graciously pleased to manifest himself, and discover any of his divine perfections in a more peculiar manner than

¹ Isa. lxvi. 1.

he doth elsewhere ; as he is often said to dwell between the cherubims over the mercy-seat, or covering of the ark, from whence he was pleased to manifest his glory, and make known his will unto his people : and where-soever the ark was, there he was said to dwell : so long as it was in the tabernacle which Moses by his appointment made for it, that was called his “house,” or “dwelling-place,” because he there met with his people, and acquainted them with his pleasure ; and when the ark was put into the temple which Solomon built for it upon mount Sion, that was called his “house,” not only in the Old Testament, but in the New by Christ himself².

This, therefore, is that which the Psalmist here calls “the house of the Lord,” even the place where the ark then was, and where the Lord had therefore promised to be in a special manner. Thither all the men in Israel were bound to go at least three times every year, though many of them lived about an hundred miles off. And some have thought that this Psalm was composed for that occasion, that the people might better express the joy and pleasure they had in that holy journey, saying, or singing, to one another as they went, “I was glad,” or “rejoiced, when they said unto me, We will,” or “Let us, go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is at unity in itself ; for thither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord, to testify unto Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord,” &c.

But it might serve as well for those who, living near it, went every day to the house of the Lord, to perform their devotions to him, and to receive his blessing ; as all that were truly pious did. They took all opportunities they could get of going thither at the hours of prayer, and were glad when any put them in mind of it, and called upon them to go, saying, “Let us go into the house of the Lord.” And so doubtless are all such

² John ii. 16.

at this day. All that truly love, and fear, and honour God, are as glad to go into his house now, as they were then.

It is true, we have no such outward signs of his special presence in our churches, as they had of old in the tabernacle, and temple: but, howsoever, we cannot doubt but that he is as specially present with us in such places, as he was with them. For we have his own word for it; saying, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them³." Whereby we are fully assured, that he doth not now presentiate himself only in one place, as he did under the law; but that wheresoever his faithful people meet together in his name, to serve and worship him, he is there with them, to assist them in what they do, and to bless and sanctify it to them. And, therefore, every such place dedicated to his service may as properly be called "the house of the Lord," as the temple was. And every pious and devout soul delights as much in going thither, as David did, and can as truly say, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

This, therefore, is that which I shall now demonstrate to you, and for that purpose shall consider, first, the persons who are always glad to go into the house of the Lord; and then, the reasons why they are so.

First, as to the persons: we must not think that all sorts of people delight in going to church, the house of God; for we see the contrary by daily experience: even that many, yea, most of these too who profess the faith of Christ, choose rather to go any where else than thither. Some had rather go to an ale-house, or tavern, or play-house, where they may please their flesh or their fancy. Others are for a shop, a warehouse, or the exchange, where they may buy, or sell, and get gain: like those in the prophet, who said, "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making

³ Matt. xviii. 20.

the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit⁴?" that is, in plain terms, they had rather be cheating their neighbours, than serving God. Nay, there are many, too many, who choose to sit still at home, and do nothing, rather than go to church, and do the work that is there required of them. Such as these are not glad, but sorry and troubled, when any say unto them, "Let us go into the house of the Lord;" and will look upon them as their enemies, for offering to make such an impertinent and troublesome motion to them.

And it is no wonder; for such people know not what to do at church, nor can take any pleasure in what is there done: they care not for praying, or praising God; neither doth the word preached any way profit them, "not being mixed with faith in them that hear it⁵." The church is no more to them than an ordinary house; and the whole service that is there performed seems to them an insipid business, which they can no way relish, or delight in. And the reason is, because their minds being taken up with the affairs of this life, they are altogether incapable of all things belonging to their everlasting peace; for, as the apostle observes, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned⁶." Hence it is, that such men, when they are at church, are restless and uneasy all the while, and long to be out again, that they may follow the business, or enjoy the pleasures, their hearts are set on: as for what is done there, they know not what to make of it; and therefore it is no wonder that they care not how seldom they come thither; and if they ever do, it is not a pleasure, but a grief and a trouble to them; which notwithstanding they are forced sometimes to bear with, to keep up their credit and reputation in the world; lest their neighbours should think them to be what they are,—mere natural and carnal men, that

⁴ Amos viii. 5.

⁵ Heb. iv. 2.

⁶ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

have no sense at all of religion, but live as without God in the world.

But although these be not, there are other persons that are glad, as David was, to “go into the house of the Lord.” But they are such as David was, of whom it is said, that “he was a man after God’s own heart⁷,” that is, he was a truly good and virtuous man, one that loved God with all his heart, and lived constantly in his true faith and fear, making it his chief care and business to obey, and serve, and please, and honour him. His heart was wholly inclined to God, and set to obey his commandments, and to glorify his holy name, and so was such a one as God would have him to be,—a man after his own heart; who therefore took great delight in every thing that tended to the glory of God: particularly what vast preparations did he make for the building and adorning the house of God, where He might be served and worshipped! and all because he had set his affection upon it, as he himself said⁸. What a mighty love and zeal had he for it! “Lord,” said he, “I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth⁹.” “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up¹.” How earnestly did he desire to go thither²! How was he grieved when any thing hindered him from going to the house of God! envying the very sparrows and swallows that could get thither, when he could not³. How much did he prefer the time he spent there before all the rest of his life: and the lowest place in the house of God before the highest in all the earth besides! “A day in thy courts,” saith he, “is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness⁴.” And, therefore, he might well say, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.”

And so may all good men as well as he: for they are

⁷ 1 Sam. xiii. 14.

⁸ 1 Chron. xxix. 3.

⁹ Ps. xxvi. 8.

¹ Ps. lxi. 9.

² Ps. xlii. 1, 2; lxxxiv. 1, 2.

³ Ps. lxxxiv. 3.

⁴ Ver. 10.

all of the same temper, all actuated by the same spirit as he was; and therefore cannot but delight as much in going to the house of God as he did; and that upon several accounts. First, because of the great comfort they find in doing their duty to God, in worshipping and serving him that made them, and so answering his end in the making of them: for being conscious to themselves of the duty they owe to God, they can never be at rest in their own minds, without paying it, as far as they can, to him. But when they are doing that, their consciences are quiet, and their minds satisfied, and pleased with the thoughts of their doing what God would have them, and that he is, therefore, well pleased with them. And, whatsoever some may think, this is certainly the greatest comfort that any man can have on this side heaven; in comparison of which all the seeming pleasures of this world are nothing but fancy and delusion. “Our rejoicing,” saith the apostle, “is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity . . . we have had our conversation in the world⁵.” This is the rejoicing of every good man, when he goes into the house of God,—that his conscience bears witness with him that he is going about the works of God, the works that he was made for, even to serve and glorify his Maker: hence it is, that they whom God hath sometimes stirred up to go to church, if they afterwards leave it off again, or neglect it upon any slight occasion, their consciences usually fly in their faces, and torment them for it: whereas they who, like Anna the prophetess, never depart from the house of God, but serve him there with fastings and prayer day and night⁶, that is, never, or very rarely, omit either morning or evening sacrifice, their consciences have nothing to say against them for that, but bear witness for them that they do their duty, and please God, and so always live under his favour and protection; and how great a pleasure that is, none can tell but they who feel it: but they find

⁵ 2 Cor. i. 12.

⁶ Luke ii. 37.

and feel it to be the greatest pleasure of their lives, the only true joy and comfort of their hearts, and, therefore, must needs rejoice and be glad at all opportunities they can get of going into the house of the Lord.

And so they are too, because of the good company they meet with there: for there they do not only meet with their fellow-Christians, ready to join with them in the work they go about, but there they meet also with the best Friend they have in the world,—with Almighty God himself; not as he is their Creator only, but as he is their Saviour also and Redeemer. For as such, he said, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them⁷.” But whensoever we go to perform our devotions in the house of God, we always do it in his name. And, therefore, whatsoever company we may chance to meet with there, we are sure of his. He is certainly among them, in the midst of them; for we have his own word for it, which is infinitely more than as if we saw him there with our eyes, or heard him speaking to us, as Moses sometimes did in the tabernacle; for our eyes and our ears might deceive us, but God cannot: “He cannot lie⁸.” And, therefore, he having said that he is in the midst of us when we meet together in his name, he cannot but be there. And we may and ought to be as confident of it, as we are, or can be, of any thing in the world besides; so as never to doubt but that, as it is his house where we meet, so we always meet with him there.

But may we meet with our Lord and Saviour Christ, whensoever we go into the house of God? Is he always there in the midst of us? Who then would not go thither as oft as he can? Men generally delight in nothing so much as in the company of one they love. But all good men, all true Christians, love Christ Jesus above all the things and persons upon earth; and therefore cannot but long to be where he is, and enjoy

⁷ Matt. xviii. 20.

⁸ Tit. i. 2.

his company. "Whom having not seen, they love; in whom, though now they see him not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory⁹;" though they see him not with their bodily eyes, yet by faith, which is the "evidence of things not seen¹," they are fully assured that he is there; and therefore cannot but delight and rejoice in being there more than in any other place or company upon earth besides. And they that do not, have too much cause to suspect that they have not that love and value for their Saviour which a Christian ought to have, and without which no man can truly be called a Christian: if they had, they could never think much of spending an hour or two in a day in his presence, but would look upon the time they are with him, as the best spent of any part of the day; would joyfully embrace all opportunities of meeting with him, and would be glad when any put them in mind of it, saying, "Let us go into the house of the Lord."

Especially considering, in the next place, that he is in the midst of them, not only as a spectator, auditor, and observer, of what they do, and speak, and think together; but he is there as their Saviour and Redeemer, to assist them in what they do; to sanctify it to them; and to bestow his manifold favours and blessings upon them, according to their several necessities and occasions. Hear what he himself saith, "In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee²." But wheresoever we meet together in his name, there his name is recorded, or remembered; and, therefore, he doth not only come thither, but he comes on purpose to bless us. But what blessings doth he bestow on those who meet together in his name? In general, all sorts of blessings which they are capable of and want: they were all purchased by him with the price of his blood; and, therefore, are wholly at his disposal. And he usually distributes them in his own house to those who

⁹ 1 Pet. i. 8.

¹ Heb. xi. 1.

² Exod. xx. 24.

meet there in his name, and so come thither for them; for when they are there, he, according to his word, comes to them, and blesseth them: he blesseth them with spiritual blessings in heavenly places; he gives them a true sight of their sins, with an hearty sorrow and repentance for them; he fills their souls with a sense of God's mercy in the pardon and forgiveness of them; he opens their eyes, and turns them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; he enlightens their minds, that they may see the wonderful things which are written in the law and gospel; he directs them how to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, and to make their calling and election sure; he grants whatsoever they ask in his name, so far as he sees it to be good for them; he perfumes their hymns and praises with the incense of his own merits, that God may smell a sweet savour from them: he strengtheneth and refresheth their souls with his own body and blood, that they may run with patience the race that is set before them; he poureth down such a measure of his grace and Spirit upon them, whereby they are enabled to walk in holiness and righteousness before him all their days, and so makes them "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

These are some of those many and great blessings, which God our Saviour usually distributes in his own house, while his people are there praying, and praising God, hearing his word, and receiving the Sacrament of his last Supper, which are therefore called "the means of grace," because they are the ordinary means that Christ hath appointed, wherein to give us his grace and blessing, which all wise and good men desire above all things else, and, therefore, cannot but join with David in saying, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

But hath he no temporal blessings to bestow, as well as spiritual? Yes, surely, they also are all at his disposal, and he gives them to his servants, so far as they are blessings; that is, so far as they are good and

necessary for them; for otherwise they are not blessings, but curses. But he gives them ordinarily with the other, or rather upon their seeking the other before them, and coming unto him for them, according to his word and promise, saying, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things," that is, all things that are needful for you, "shall be added unto you³." Whereby his faithful servants have as great a security as can be given them, that they shall never want any thing that is good for them; for they have the infallible word of God himself for it, from whom "comes every good and perfect gift, and with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning⁴." And, therefore, it is impossible that they, who seek and serve him before all things, should want any thing that is really good for them, so far as it is so: as impossible as it is for God to lie.

So that all, who sincerely devote themselves to his service, need never fear losing any thing by leaving their shops, or houses, for a while, to go to church,—the house of God. But they should rather be confident, and rest fully satisfied in their minds, that as they go thither to wait upon him, and to do the work that he hath set them; so he, according to his word, will come unto them, and will bless them. He will bless them in their going out, and in their coming in; he will bless them in their basket and in their store; he will bless them in their callings, that they may be sure to get what is needful for them; and he will bless what they have so gotten, both to themselves and families. This they may truly promise themselves, for God himself hath promised it. And, therefore, they may well rejoice and be glad at all opportunities they can get of going into the house of the Lord.

This will appear further, if we consider also the great pleasure that good men take in what is done while they are in the house of God; howsoever irksome and tedious it may seem to other people, they,

³ Matt. vi. 33.

⁴ James i. 17.

who truly love and fear God above all things, find more true joy and comfort in his house, than they can do any where else; they are there in their proper element, about the business they are most inclined to, and, therefore, must needs be most delighted in, as being suitable to their renewed nature, and agreeable to their spiritual temper and disposition. So that the whole work of the place in itself affords them great joy and pleasure, which is very much augmented also by the Holy Spirit of God co-operating with them in it; whereby the hearts of those who are rightly disposed for it are usually filled with all the joy and comfort which as yet they are capable of: according to the promise that God himself hath made to that purpose, where, speaking of those who faithfully serve him, and love his name, he saith, "Them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer⁵." "In my house of prayer;" that is, the place where he usually cheereth and refresheth his people's spirits, more than in any other place upon earth: as I do not doubt but many here present have often found by their own experience, who, coming sometimes dull, and heavy, and disconsolate, into the house of God, have there had such discoveries of his greatness and glory, and such intimations of his love and mercy to them, whereby their hearts have been raised up to the highest pitch of joy and cheerfulness, such as none could give them, but he that promised to make them joyful in his house of prayer; and who never fails to perform his promise to them who come thither duly prepared, and keep their minds intent upon him, and upon the duties which are there performed to him, according to the orders and directions of our Church.

I say, according to the orders and directions of our Church; for I speak not of what is done in those private assemblies, where the people have nothing to do but to hearken to what is done by another; and,

⁵ Isa. lvi. 7.

besides a sermon, have nothing but an *extempore* prayer, which they know not what it will be, until they hear it, and so cannot heartily join in it. But I speak only of the offices and duties which are constantly performed in the house of God, according to the appointment of our Church; all which, by God's blessing upon them, and by his grace working together with them, both jointly and severally conduce very much towards the making his people joyful, and therefore glad to go into the house of the Lord.

Which that I may demonstrate to you, I shall instance more particularly in some of them, and shew how they do not only edify, but recreate and cheer the spirits of all that are truly pious and devout, all the while that they are duly exercised in them. For which purpose I may first observe, that they having at their first entrance into his house confessed their sins to God, and being thereby possessed with a deep sense of the insupportable and eternal torments which they have deserved by them, the minister, in the name of God, and by his authority, solemnly declares, 'that he pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel.' Which to them who are sensible of, and truly penitent for, their sins, as all good people are, is certainly the greatest comfort in the world: in that they are hereby assured, that, notwithstanding their manifold provocations of him, Almighty God, upon their repentance and faith in Christ, is now reconciled to them, and receives them into his grace and favour, as much as if they had never offended him. They who are not comforted and rejoiced at this, have too much cause to suspect that they do not feel the weight of their sins, nor regard the love of God; for if they did, they would receive his absolution with the highest expressions of joy and thankfulness; and would not only be glad to go into the house of the Lord, but would be sure always to go soon enough to receive it.

His faithful people now looking upon themselves as absolved from their sins, and restored to the favour of

God, according to the promise he hath made in Jesus Christ our Lord, they immediately address themselves to him, as their gracious and most merciful Father, saying, "Our Father, which art in heaven." And so they go on in the several parts of the service, to present their petitions to him, "coming boldly," as the apostle speaks, "unto the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need⁶," not doubting but that he, being now reconciled to them through Christ, will grant them whatsoever they ask in his name, according to his own word, saying, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you⁷." In confidence of which promise they accordingly ask whatsoever they stand in need of, either as to this world, or the next; still keeping their eye and their faith fixed upon the almighty Creator of the world, as their most loving Father; and upon his Son, as their most powerful advocate with him, continually making intercession for them, that their services may be accepted, and their petitions granted by him, so far as he in his infinite wisdom knows them to be expedient for them. Thus, all the while they are upon their knees, they are conversing with Almighty God, and exercising their faith in Christ, and so have "fellowship both with the Father and the Son⁸." Now what a mighty pleasure and comfort this is to all the true saints and servants of God, I need not tell them: though nobody else doth, they know it, they feel it to be the greatest, the only true joy and comfort of their hearts. For hereby they enjoy communion with God, the chiefest, the only good; and rest fully satisfied in their minds, that they shall want nothing that is good for them, nothing that can either do them or make them good; seeing they have him who is all good in himself, and his word for whatsoever they ask that is so to them: whereby they, according to their capacities in this mortal state, in some measure enjoy all the good things that God hath made, and him too

⁶ Heb. iv. 16.⁷ John xvi. 23.⁸ 1 John i. 3.

that made them. Which is so great an happiness, that they who have once tasted of it, cannot but always desire it; and therefore must needs be glad to go into the house of the Lord to partake of it.

Besides that they never go into the house of the Lord but they have some part of his own word solemnly read, if not expounded also to them; and so they always there hear their heavenly Father speaking and making known himself and his holy will unto them, what he would have them believe and do, that they may continue in his love and favour, which all his dutiful and obedient children prize and desire above all things in this world. "The judgments of the Lord," saith David, "are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb⁹." "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver¹." "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth²!"

And, verily, it is no wonder that the children of God thus highly value and delight in his holy word; for as it is by his word that they are begotten or born again of God, and so made his children at first³; so the same word is afterwards the proper nourishment of their souls, whereby their new and spiritual life is sustained and increased in them, so as to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ⁴." And therefore, "as new born babes," they cannot but "desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby⁵." But this is communicated to them by their heavenly Father most effectually in his own house; for although they may read the word of God over and over again at home, or in any other place, yet they find by experience, that it never comes with so much power and efficacy upon them, as when it is administered to them in his own house, in his name, by an officer of his own appointment, while his people are

⁹ Ps. xix. 9, 10.

¹ Ps. cxix. 72.

² Ver. 103.

³ James i. 18.

⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 2.

⁵ 2 Pet. iii. 18.

met together to serve and worship him, and so have his Holy Spirit assisting and co-operating with his word, that it may work effectually in them that believe⁶; who, therefore, finding the word of God to be quite another thing when publicly read or explained in God's house, than it is at their own, they cannot but be exceeding glad of all opportunities of going thither to hear it.

Especially seeing when they come there, they do not only pray and hear God's holy word, but they join together, also, in praising and magnifying his holy name; not only a little by the bye, as occasion serves in the Prayers and Lessons, but in a set and solemn manner: so that this makes a great, if not the greatest part of our daily service; which we have no sooner begun, but we presently call upon one another, saying, in the words of the Holy Ghost, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving: and shew ourselves glad in him with Psalms." And then we, accordingly, go on to praise him with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs: we commonly repeat several psalms together, and, after every one of them, we constantly give glory to God, saying, 'Glory be to the Father,' &c. After the First Lesson we repeat the Te Deum, "We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord;" or else the Benedicite, "O all ye Works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever." After the Second Lesson we say the Benedictus, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for he hath visited, and redeemed his people;" or else the hundredth Psalm, called the Jubilate, "O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands: serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song." And so in the afternoon we sing the Magnificat, or the ninety-eighth Psalm, after the First Lesson; and, after the Second, the Nunc Dimittis, or the sixty-seventh Psalm: besides all which,

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we constantly repeat the Creed, or Confession of our faith, wherein we acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and recount the wonderful things which the Son of God hath done for us; how ‘he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, descended into hell, rose again the third day, ascended up into heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father.’ By all which we set forth the praises of the most high God in the best manner we can do it upon earth.

Thus, whensoever we come into the house of the Lord, we join together in praising him, our almighty Creator, and most merciful Redeemer; and so do the great work for which he created and redeemed us; which, therefore, must needs be very pleasant and delightful to those who believe themselves to be not only created, but likewise redeemed by him for that end and purpose. As David found by experience, when he said, “My soul shall be satisfied, even as it were with marrow and fatness, when my mouth praiseth thee with joyful lips⁷.” Where we may likewise observe, that joyfulness doth so necessarily accompany our praising God, that we can never do it aright without it; for we must always praise him with joyful lips; “We must sing merrily to God our strength, and make a cheerful noise unto the God of Jacob⁸.” “And rejoice in giving praise for the operations of his hands⁹.” Which we cannot choose but do, if we duly consider those infinite perfections we acknowledge in him, and the glorious works we praise him for; for the very agnizing and celebrating of them fills our souls with unspeakable joy and pleasure, the highest that we are capable of. This is that which makes heaven itself to be so pleasant a place to those who dwell there, because they are always praising God. There the ‘Cherubin and Seraphin continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; Heaven and earth

⁷ Ps. lxiii. 6.

⁸ Ps. lxxxi. 1.

⁹ Ps. xcii. 4.

are full of the Majesty of thy Glory.' There 'the glorious company of the Apostles praise him.' There 'the goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise him.' There 'the noble army of Martyrs praise him.' There all the spirits of just men made perfect praise him continually. And if we shall ever be so happy as to be admitted into their blessed society, we shall join with them in praising him that brought us thither: this will be our work, and this will be our pleasure for evermore: and as ever we desire to do it there, we must delight in doing it here first; otherwise our hearts will not be set right for it, and so we "shall not be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:" but that is the thing which all that are truly wise and pious most earnestly desire above all things else, and, therefore, cannot but always rejoice and be glad to go into the house of God, that they may there praise him, and so begin that work in time, which they hope to continue to all eternity.

But that which, above all, makes the saints and servants of the most high God so joyful in his house of prayer, and, therefore, so glad to go thither, is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, usually performed there, - ordained by our Lord, the almighty God, our Saviour himself, on purpose to put us in mind of him, and so to confirm our faith in him, to inflame our love to him, to excite our desires and longing after him, to fill our hearts with joy and thankfulness for him, that our souls may be strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are with bread and wine. Here we receive the pardon of all our sins, sealed to us in the blood of the Son of God. Here we eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ by faith, so as that 'he dwelleth in us, and we in him; he is one with us, and we with him.'

Hereby we are assured of God's love and favour to us, and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of his Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people, and also are heirs, through hope, of his everlasting kingdom, by the merits of the most

precious death and passion of his dear Son. Where shall we find matter of so great joy and comfort on this side heaven? No where, certainly, but in God's own house, where he is pleased to give it us at his holy Table, when the sacrament of his most blessed body and blood is there administered, as it is every Lord's day in this, and some other, and ought to be so in all the houses of God in the land; that his people may never want that spiritual food which he hath provided for them, wherewith to nourish and preserve both their souls and bodies to everlasting life, which his dutiful and obedient children, always hungering and thirsting after, cannot but be overjoyed at all occasions of having it administered unto them. And, therefore, as they always rejoice and are glad when any say unto them, "Let us go into the house of the Lord," so especially when they say, "Let us go unto the table of the Lord;" and are always ready to say with David, Psalm lxxv. 4.

These things I thought good to put you in mind of at this time, not only to shew what cause we have to thank God that his house is refitted, and that we are got again into it; but likewise that you may see that it is your interest, as well as duty, to frequent it as much as possibly you can. I am very sensible that all that I have now said, and all that can be said upon this subject, will have but little effect upon the greatest part of them which hear it: for we live in an age that is only for hearing, not for doing any thing they hear; much less that which ye have now heard; which, as I observed before, none can receive in the love of it, but only such as are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and so are wholly devoted to the service of God. All others will think what you have now heard to be a mere paradox. They can never get it into their heads that there is any profit or pleasure to be had at church, because they could never find it there: but the reason is, not because it is not to be had, but because their minds being set upon other things, they are not qualified or disposed for those pure and spiritual joys which

God vouchsafeth to his people in his own house, and to none but them. All others are altogether unacquainted with them; which being the many, or rather the most, hence it comes to pass, that daily prayers are so much slighted and neglected among us, far more, to our shame be it spoken, than among any other sort of people in the world. The Papists will rise up in judgment with this generation, for they every day observe their canonical hours for praying, at least, for that which they believe to be so. The Jews will rise up in judgment with this generation, for they never omitted to offer their daily sacrifices so long as they had an house of God wherein to offer them. The Turks shall rise up in judgment with this generation, for when their priests call the people to prayer, as they do several times every day, they immediately run to their mosques or temples: and if any offer to stay at home, he is shunned by all, as a wicked, atheistical wretch. The Heathens will rise up in judgment with this generation, for if they had such opportunities, as we have, of praying and praising their almighty Creator every day, I doubt not but they would do it far more constantly than it is done by most of us. What, then, can we expect, but that some severe judgment or other will, ere long, be inflicted on us; when people generally live as without God in the world, notwithstanding the clear discoveries that he hath made of himself unto them, and notwithstanding the means of grace which are so constantly administered to them, but they will not use them?

But let others continue, if they please, in this wicked course, and take what follows. You have now heard what a joyful and pleasant thing it is to go into the house of God, to serve and worship him there; be now advised to do it, and to do it as oft as possibly you can. I dare assure you ye will then experience the truth of all that I have now said of it, and far more than I am able to express. But for that purpose, whensoever ye go into the house of the Lord, you must lay aside all other business, and apply yourselves wholly to the du-

ties of that holy place; you must keep your minds intent all the while upon him before whom ye are, and upon the work which he hath there set you; you must confess your sins heartily; you must receive his absolution faithfully; you must hear his word attentively; you must pray sincerely; you must “praise him lustily and with a good courage:” and when ye receive the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, you must do it with that true repentance, that strong faith, that heavenly joy and thankfulness, that is due to so great a mystery. Thus exercising your souls continually in these holy and spiritual duties that are performed in God’s lower houses upon earth, you will be every day more and more prepared and fitted to live with him in heaven, there to enjoy and praise him for ever.

SERMON XVII.

A GOOD-FRIDAY SERMON.

ZECH. xii. 10.

“And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.”

WE this day commemorate the passion of our blessed Saviour,—the passion of the Son of God,—the greatest mystery that was ever known or heard of in the world; that light itself should be darkened, love rejected, innocence accused, justice condemned, life die, even God himself suffer,—who is able to think upon it without ecstasies and raptures? Who can speak of it without astonishment and admiration? And yet how strange soever it may seem to be, it is altogether as true too, as being attested by truth and veracity itself.

And it is well for us it was so, even that he who suffered was truly God, as well as man; otherwise we had been all lost and undone for ever. For if he had not been man, he could not have suffered at all for us: so if he had not been God, too, he could not have saved us by his sufferings; all the virtue and efficacy of his passions depending altogether upon the worth and excellency of the Person that underwent them, who being God as well as man, although he suffered only in his manhood, yet that manhood being at the

same time united to the Godhead in the same Person, these his sufferings could not but be of infinite value and merit, as being the sufferings of God himself, who is therefore said to have purchased "his church with his own blood ¹."

And this, indeed, is the only ground and foundation of all our hopes and expectations from Christ; for he, being both perfect God and perfect man in one and the same Person, did, by his one oblation of himself once offered, make a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world; whereby there is none of us but in and through him may now obtain both the pardon of all our sins, and the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls, if we do but perform those easy conditions which are required of us, in order to our having the sufferings of our human nature in Christ applied to our own particular persons: that so we may be looked upon as having already undergone the punishment of our sins in him who died in our stead, and, by virtue of his merit and mediation for us, may be truly sanctified, and by consequence received into God's grace and favour here, and into his kingdom and glory hereafter.

And verily now that Christ hath done and suffered so much for us, we cannot surely but look upon ourselves as highly obliged to do and suffer all we can for him, at least, all that he expects from us; which indeed is but very little, or, rather, nothing in comparison of his love and kindness to us. For what would he have us do for him? Only what he himself hath commanded in the words of my text, saying, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him," &c.

For that these words are to be understood of Christ, is certain from the infallible testimony of St. John himself, who having related the doleful tragedy of our Lord's passion, how they pierced his hands and feet with nails, and his side with a spear, he saith, "That

¹ Acts xx. 28.

all this was done that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They shall look on him whom they have pierced²." Where he plainly quotes the words of my text, and applies them to our blessed Saviour. And indeed they cannot possibly be understood of any other person in the world; for none could speak these words but one who was both God and man. That he was God, is plain from the former part of the verse, where he saith, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication." For it is acknowledged by all, that the Spirit of grace is not at the disposal of any creature, but that it is only in the power of God to bestow it upon us. And therefore he that here promiseth to pour out his Spirit upon his Church could be no other than God himself: and then that he was man too, appears from the next words, even those of my text, "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced." For if he had not been man, he would not have been capable of being pierced by them. In short, therefore, if he had not been God, he could not have said, "I will pour upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication;" and if he had not been man, he could not have said, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced." And, therefore, he that spake these words could be no other than Christ himself, there being no person in the world that ever was, or so much as pretended to be, both God and man, but only he.

And as these words are spoken by Christ himself, so he spake them to his whole Church, and all the members of it, which he here calls "the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem;" under which titles both in this and other prophets the whole Church of Christ is frequently comprehended, especially in this place, where the Spirit of grace and supplication is promised. For this promise of the Spirit cannot possibly be restrained only to the Jewish nation, or in-

² John xix. 37.

habitants of Jerusalem, in a strict and literal sense ; it being a great promise which was always made, and hath been all along fulfilled, to the universal Church, or congregation of faithful people dispersed over the whole world. And therefore we, as members of the Catholic Church, are all equally concerned in what is here said. But we must take all together. And as we desire Christ should perform the promise which here he makes to us, so we must be sure to perform the duties which he here requires of us, saying, “And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him,” &c.

First, saith he, “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced;” which words, I confess, may seem to be a promise, as well as command; our Saviour here promising to assist us with his grace and Spirit, to look upon him as we ought to do. But, seeing he neither promiseth to enable us to do any thing but what himself commandeth us to do, I shall briefly consider the words only as containing Christ’s command to us, and, by consequence, our duty unto him. And that we may understand his divine will and pleasure in them aright, we must know that the verb **הִבִּיט**, here used in the original, sometimes signifies “the beholding any object with our bodily eyes;” but in this place it cannot possibly be so understood, for in that sense the whole Church never did, nor ever shall, see Christ, until we all appear before his judgment-seat; and, therefore, the word must needs be here, as it is elsewhere, used in a more large and metaphorical sense, even for “our looking upon him with the eye, not of sense, but of reason and faith.”

And so it imports, that we ought to contemplate often, and meditate upon, our Saviour’s death, not simply as in itself considered, but as suffered purely upon our account. “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced;” implying, that we should look upon him as pierced, as crucified by ourselves, for our sins, so as to acknowledge and believe that whatsoever he suffered was not for his own, but only for our

sakes: that he bare our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed. He assumed our human, that we might partake of his divine nature. He was weary, that we might rest; he hungered, that we might eat the bread, and thirsted, that we might drink the water, of life. He grieved, that we might rejoice; wept, that we might laugh; and became miserable, to make us happy. He was apprehended, that we might escape; accused, that we might be acquitted; and condemned, that we might be absolved. He died, that we might live; and was crucified by men, that we might be justified before God. In brief, "he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him³."

And looking thus upon Christ as dying for us, and bearing the punishment of our sins, that we might be freed from them; we are to look up unto him, as the word also signifies, so as to expect and hope for pardon and salvation from him, humbly trusting, and confiding, and believing on him, both for grace to repent, that our sins may be pardoned; and for pardon of our sins, when we have repented; and likewise for his continual assistance of us in the performance of all such good works as he hath prepared for us to walk in; that we may do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us, and be made so holy now, that in, and through him, we may be happy for ever.

For which end we must perform the other duty also here enjoined, which I design chiefly to speak to, as expressed in these words: "And they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son; and be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

In which words, we may observe the person changed from the first to the third. In the foregoing words it was said, "They shall look upon ME," and here "they

³ 2 Cor. v. 21.

shall mourn for HIM;" which change in the person is very common in the prophets. But here it seems to imply that, though Christ himself spake the former words, or, at least, the prophet in the person of Christ, saying, "They shall look upon me," yet these that immediately follow, "And they shall mourn for him," were spoken by the prophet only in the name of Christ, as other prophets use to speak. And whereas he saith, "They shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and be in bitterness for him, as one is in bitterness for his firstborn;" although I do not question but the prophet might allude to our Saviour's being the only-begotten of the Father, and "the first-born of every creature⁴," as the apostle calls him, yet I look upon the words as intended principally to express the greatness of that grief and mourning which should be in the Church for the passion of our blessed Saviour; like that of a man that hath lost his only son, or his firstborn; which being the greatest loss a man can suffer, it usually causes the greatest sorrow that a man can shew in this world.

Now in speaking to this duty I shall first shew, that there ought to be some time set apart every year to commemorate our Saviour's passion, and to fast and mourn for the occasion of it: and then, secondly, I shall endeavour to assist and direct you in the performance of it.

As for the first, I think it needful to speak something to it, both to justify our present meeting together upon this occasion, and also because my text itself leads me to it, and supplies me with an argument for it; for when the prophet hath told us how the Church shall mourn for the death of Christ, he in the next words saith, "In that day there shall be great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon."

For the right understanding of which words we must know, first, that Hadadrimmon was a city near

⁴ Col. i. 15.

Jezreel, in the valley of Megiddon, which St. Jerome saith in his time was called Maximianopolis. Secondly, near to this city, in the valley of Megiddo, that pious king Josiah was slain by Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt, as we read in 2 Chron. xxxv. 21—24. Thirdly, upon the death of that good king the prophet Jeremiah, and the church at that time, made great lamentations, and ordered that the death of the said king should be lamented every year, like the death and martyrdom of our late Sovereign of ever blessed memory, as we may easily gather from the 25th verse of the said chapter: from whence also we may observe with St. Jerome, Josephus, and others, that the book of the Lamentations was written by the prophet upon that occasion; and, indeed, it agrees exactly with the sad and lamentable estate of the Church immediately after the death of Josiah, although it be here and there interspersed with some prophetical expressions relating to the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened soon after; so that the book of the Lamentations seems to have been a kind of Service-book, or Office, composed by the prophet, and appointed to be used and inserted into their public devotions every year, upon the day when they commemorated and lamented the death of so good a king. Fourthly, this anniversary mourning for Josiah being occasioned by his death near Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddon, and the inhabitants of that city being, as may be well supposed, the first that observed it, and the most strict in the observation of it, hence it was afterwards called, “The mourning of Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddon.”

Now, the premisses being thus considered, it is easy to draw our conclusion from them. For it is here said, that the mourning for the death of Christ shall be like that of Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddon. But the mourning of Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddon, was an anniversary mourning for the death of king Josiah. And, therefore, it necessarily follows, that the mourning for our Saviour’s passion should be

an anniversary too. For otherwise it would not be like to that. And, for my own part, I can see no reason in the world why these words should be inserted here, and this comparison not used by the prophet, but only to shew that it is the will of God that the Church should once every year commemorate the passion of our blessed Saviour with fasting and mourning, as the Jews did the death of king Josiah.

To this we may add another argument out of the Old Testament also, drawn from the day of Expiation, so religiously observed in that Church by the express command of God himself. For the explaining whereof, we must consider, first, that once every year, viz., upon the tenth day of the seventh month, afterwards called Tisri, the high priest was to make atonement for the people. For which end, amongst other things, there were two he-goats presented before the Lord; whereof the high priest took one, and offered him up for a sin-offering, and with the blood of it he went into the holy of holies, which he never did but upon this day. Then he took the other goat, laid both his hands upon the head of the goat, and confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and laid them upon the head of the goat, and then sent it alive into the wilderness; and therefore it was called Azazel, or "the scape-goat," which, as the text says, "bore upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited⁵." Now this was a most exact type of Christ, upon whom God hath laid the iniquities of us all. The goat that was offered up as a sin-offering typified the human nature of Christ; yet was offered up as a sacrifice for our sins. The other, the scape-goat, typified his divine nature; which surviving the human, by virtue of its union to it, carried our sins away into the land of forgetfulness, never to be remembered more. So that this was, indeed, the most lively representation in the whole Mosaic law of that grand expiatory sacrifice, which Christ, as God-man,

⁵ Levit. xvi. 22.

was to offer up for the sins of the whole world. Secondly, upon the day that this was done the people were commanded to afflict themselves. "This," saith God, "shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls⁶," that is, "you shall afflict them with fasting," as the Jerusalem Targum and Jonathan expound it; so do the Arabic and Samaritan Versions: and not only the Fathers, but Philo Judæus and Josephus, both learned Jews, say they fasted upon that day till evening: so says the Talmud; yea, the prophet Jeremiah calls it "the fasting day⁷," and St. Luke, "the fast⁸." The Jews also call it "the fast," "the great fast," sometimes יוֹם, "the day," κατ' ἑξοχὴν, as the greatest day in the whole year: Isaiah calls it "the sabbath⁹." Yea, God himself calls it שַׁבַּת שְׁבַתוֹן, "a sabbath of rest¹⁰." From whence Theodoret rightly observes, that it was πολλὰ τοῦ σαββάτου σεβασμιωτέρα, "much more sacred and venerable than the common sabbath:" all which shews in how great esteem this day was amongst them, and how strictly it was observed by the appointment of God himself.

But what should be the reason of all this? Why should this day be so religiously observed above all others? For that we must consider, in the third place, that the reason is assigned by God himself, who saith, You shall then afflict your souls, because on that day atonement shall be made for you, "to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord¹," and because it is יוֹם כְּפֻרִים, "the day of expiations" or "atonement," to make atonement for you before the Lord². So that they were therefore to fast and afflict their souls upon that day, because upon that day their sins were expiated. Expiated, how? By the blood of bulls and goats? No; that is impossible, as the apostle teacheth³; but they were expiated by the

⁶ Lev. xvi. 29.⁷ Jer. xxxvi. 6.⁸ Acts xxvii. 9.⁹ Isa. lviii. 13.¹⁰ Levit. xvi. 29.¹ Lev. xvi. 30.² Lev. xxiii. 28.³ Heb. x. 4.

blood of Christ, then represented to them under the types and shadows before spoken of.

Hence I observe, in the last place, that, although the law itself was ceremonial, and therefore abolished, yet the reason of it is moral, and so obligeth us as much as it did them. For we believe and hope for the expiation of our sins by the blood of Christ, as much as they did; and, therefore, the same reason that obliged them to fast and mourn once every year at the representation of Christ's death unto them, the same obligeth us to do the same at the commemoration of it.

Besides that, although the sacrifices then offered were typical, and the day on which they fasted ceremonial, and, therefore, now not necessary to be observed, but rather necessary not to be observed by us, yet fasting itself is a moral duty, and so of perpetual obligation. And, therefore, seeing it hath pleased the most high God to declare it to be his will and pleasure that his Church should perform this duty once every year, upon the account of Christ's suffering and making atonement for us, I see no way how it is possible for us to be excused from fasting upon this occasion, any more than we are or can be from fasting in general.

Especially if we consider what our Saviour himself said while he was upon earth: for when some asked him, saying, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?" he answered them, "Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?—But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days⁴." In what days? Even in those days wherein he, the bridegroom, was taken from them; that is, the day whereon he was crucified, and the next day while he lay in the grave, not being restored to them again till his resurrection. In those days, saith he, they shall fast, and that not only at that time, but every year

⁴ Mark ii. 19, 20.

after, when those days return. And think not this to be any novel interpretation of these words. I will assure you it is near as old as Christianity itself, as appears from Tertullian, who lived in the very next age to the apostles. For he, speaking of the Catholic or orthodox Christians at that time, saith, *Certe in evangelio illos dies jejuniis determinatos putant, in quibus ablatus est Sponsus*. "They surely think or believe those days in which the Bridegroom was taken away, to be determined or devoted to fasting in the gospel itself:" and, therefore, both at that time, and ever after, those days were religiously observed in the Church; as might easily be demonstrated. But as for the day of the passion itself, which we are now speaking of, the same ancient Father saith expressly, that upon that day there was in his time *Communis et quasi publica jejunii religio*. So that they reckoned it a great part of their religion to fast upon that day; and so have all Christians in all places and ages ever since; insomuch that there is scarce any one thing in the whole Christian religion, wherein all the professors of it have so unanimously and perpetually agreed, as they have in the strict and religious observation of this day: yea, at this very time, except some few among ourselves, and one or two neighbour nations, go where you will, into any part of the known world, and, if there be any Christians there, you will find them at this time of the year fasting and mourning for the passion of Christ. This being one of those common notions and general customs which have spread over the face of the universal Church, and have been received in all places of the whole Christian world.

And, therefore, if any one seem to be contentious, and will, notwithstanding all this, indulge his appetite upon this day, I may answer him as the apostle did the seditious Corinthians, in the like case, that "we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God."

Thus I have briefly touched upon some of those many arguments, which might be produced for the anniversary commemoration of our Saviour's passion;

to which I might add the great reasonableness of the thing itself; but that will better appear under the second general head, wherein I promised to assist and direct you in the performance of this duty; which being the work, the great work of the day, I hope you have spent some time already in it, and are now rightly disposed to hearken to any thing that may conduce to your better observation of this day,—this great day of atonement,—whereon the Son of God made satisfaction for our sins.

First, therefore, in order hereunto, it is necessary that we seriously contemplate, and be heartily grieved for, the sufferings which our blessed Lord underwent for us, “That we look upon him whom we have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son; and be in bitterness for him, as he that is in bitterness for his first-born.” For which end we need not any ocular representations of our Saviour’s passion, as such are used in the Church of Rome, to the great scandal of the Christian religion, turning the mysteries of our faith into matters of sense, as if we were to act altogether by sight, and not by faith. No; the most effectual means is to meditate, with faith and attention, upon the sad and doleful story of our Lord’s passion, as it is recorded in the holy Gospels: out of which I shall endeavour to represent it to you in few terms.

But, that you may be duly affected with it, I desire you to carry two things in your minds all the while that I am speaking of it:—First, that he who suffered was the eternal Son of God, of the same nature, substance, and glory, with the Father. Secondly, that all he suffered was only upon our account, and for the expiation of our sins; for he had no sins of his own to suffer for: and, therefore, had it not been for man’s sins, whose nature he assumed, he neither would, nor could, have suffered at all.

Recollect yourselves, therefore, my beloved, and consider each one with himself what sins you know yourselves to have been guilty of; and remember, remember these were they, which brought our Saviour

with grief and sorrow to his grave. These were they, which exposed the Son of God to all the malice that men or devils could express against him. These were they, which made the Maker of the world to be affronted, reviled, blasphemed, rejected, despised, abused, by his own creatures. Indeed, they made his whole life upon earth but as one continued exercise of patience and self-denial. But, to pass by the misery and trouble he underwent before, let me desire you only to accompany your Lord from the Garden to the Cross, and then tell me whether you have not all the reason in the world to have compassion for him, whose passions were so great, so exceeding great, for you?

First, therefore, go into the garden of Gethsemane, where you find your Saviour the day before his crucifixion⁵. See here what your sins have done, into what a miserable condition they have brought the Son of God himself, lying so heavy, pressing so hard upon him, that his whole soul seems to be overwhelmed with grief and anguish for them. Why, what doth he say? Even that which should cut us to the very heart to hear. "My soul," saith he, "is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death⁶." Wonder of wonders! The Joy and Life of the whole world is exceeding "sorrowful, even unto death," and all for those sins which we, ungrateful wretches that we are, have lived and delighted in. But what? shall our Lord be thus exceeding sorrowful for us, and we not sympathize with him; express no grief, no sorrow for him, nor for those sins neither that brought all this upon him? Surely it is impossible, or, at least, unreasonable.

Especially if you go but a little farther into the garden, for there you see, O what do we see there? The saddest spectacle that ever mortal eye as yet beheld, even the Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, lying flat upon the ground⁷. A strange posture for so great a Prince, for Glory, for Majesty, for Eminence itself to lie in. But what is the matter?

⁵ Matt. xxvi.⁶ Ib. 38.⁷ Ib. 39.

Alas! the reason is as plain as sad, for he sees a cup in his Father's hand, a cup of deadly poison, mixed and compounded of all the sins of mankind, and of all the fire and brimstone, the wrath and vengeance, that was due unto them. This cup he sees approaching to him, brought by the hand of his own Father; upon this the human nature, being left as it were to itself, began to shrink, as loath to drink down this bitter cup. Hence it is that you find him in this doleful posture, wherein he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." If it be possible, if thou hast not absolutely determined the contrary, and if it be possible for mankind to be otherwise saved, "Let this cup pass from me:" but he had no sooner spoke the words, but the divine will exerts and manifests itself, upon which the human immediately submits; and therefore he adds, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

And now his soul was made an offering for sin indeed. For he hath no sooner drunk this invenomed cup, but see how the poison works! It puts him into a perfect agony: his veins swell, his blood is inflamed, it ferments and boils to that height, that it forceth its passage through his very skin. So that he sweats drops, "great drops of blood^s." How fast do they trickle down his blessed sides! As if all the pores of his body were now opened to let his blood out, and grief and anguish into his heart.

Consider this, all ye that are here present, and tell me whether ever sorrow was like unto Christ's sorrow, in the day when God laid on him "the iniquities of us all?" Tell me, how it was possible for the human nature to have undergone it, unless it had been supported by the omnipotence of that divine Person to which it was united? Tell me, also, how you can be able to endure yourselves, when you remember how much the

^s Luke xxii. 44.

eternal Son of God endured for you? Verily methinks the serious consideration of it would make our hearts sink within us; at least, it should make us lament and mourn, loathe and abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes, that ever we should be the occasion of so much grief and anguish, horror and consternation, to the Son of God himself!

But, alas! this is not all neither: for he was no sooner got up, and a little recovered from his agony, but presently, as if hell was let loose upon him—behold, yonder comes a great multitude of people with “swords and staves to take him,” and amongst them his own perfidious disciple, by whose assistance they both find him out, and lay violent hands upon him. And now we see what it is to fall into the hands of the rabble, against whose rage and fury neither Majesty nor Innocence itself is any security; for they have no sooner seized him, but away they hurry him from place to place, affronting, abusing, tormenting him all the way; they spit in his face, they buffet him, they mock him, they blindfold him, they smite him with the palms of their hands, they hale him from one judgment-seat to another, crying out, wheresoever they come, “Crucify him, crucify him;” they prefer a thief and a murderer before him, and never leave him till they have extorted a sentence of condemnation against him.

And now our Lord is condemned; he is condemned by those that could not have pronounced the sentence against him, had not he himself at the same time vouchsafed them breath to do it. He is condemned to die, to die for us, that we might not be condemned to eternal death by him; he is condemned to die the death, the shameful, the painful, the accursed death upon the cross; and all to redeem us from shame, from pain, and from all the curses of the law.

O the power of divine love! that ever the Judge of the whole world should thus suffer himself to be apprehended, accused, arraigned, condemned, by those who must one day appear before his judgment-seat; and all

that himself at that great day might not condemn both them and all mankind besides !

But now he is condemned, will they offer to execute so severe, so unjust a sentence upon him ? Yes, certainly, and that, too, with all the malice and fury that hell itself could put into them ; and so soon as condemned, they immediately scourge him, bow the knee before him in mockery and derision, they put a crown of thorns upon his head, and, instead of a sceptre, a reed into his hands ; and in this ignominious manner they lead him to the place of execution, where the cross being fixed in the ground, they raise his sacred body upon it, and fasten his hands and feet unto it with nails drove through them ; and in this sad posture they leave the great and glorious King of heaven and earth.

Now let us imagine ourselves to have stood by the cross whilst our Saviour thus hung upon it, and so exercise the same passions as we should have done, had we been really there : or, howsoever, let us but act our faith, that faith which is “the evidence of things not seen,” and that will realize these things unto us, as if we saw them before our eyes. By this I see my Saviour, my dear, my only Saviour, hanging yonder upon a cross ; I see his hands stretched out and nailed to the transverse beam at the upper end, and his feet towards the bottom of it ; I see both his hands and feet all bloody. How fast doth the blood gush out of the orifices which the nails have made ! What sharp and cruel pain must he needs feel in those nerves and tender parts thus pierced with iron ! Methinks I see the pain first raised there immediately diffuse itself over his whole body : his head begins to ache, his heart to pant, his joints are all upon a rack, and his soul is tormented with the sense of God’s wrath and indignation against sin now laid upon him ; methinks I see him all in a flame, offering up himself as a whole burnt-offering for the sins of mankind in general, and for mine in particular ; vile wretch, unworthy creature that

I am, that ever I should be the cause that so pure, so holy, so divine a Person should be thus afflicted !

But, hark ! What mournful noise is that I hear ? Woe is me, it is the voice of my Lord, crying out in the anguish and bitterness of his soul, "Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani ? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?"

From whence I plainly see, that his pain and torment was now as great as it was possible for man in the person of God himself to undergo ; for, although he doubts not of God's love and favour to his person, yet he finds and feels the utmost of his wrath and justice against the sins of that nature which he assumed, and wherein he now suffers to that height, that he here cries out as if he had been forsaken by God in the midst of all his troubles, and deprived of all that comfort and assistance which he was wont to receive from him.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" O, who is able to express that pain, that grief, that horror, which our Lord was in for our sakes, when he spake these doleful words ? Which, certainly, was so exceeding great, that he was not able to endure it long, for he soon after commended his spirit into his Father's hands, and so "gave up the ghost," and died. And died to the astonishment of the whole world. Indeed, all the while that he was upon the cross the sun hid his face as ashamed to behold so sad a sight ; and the heavens put on their mourning weeds, as condoling and sympathizing with their Lord and Master. But he was no sooner dead, but the whole creation seems surprised, amazed, confounded at it ; "The veil of the temple was rent in twain, the earth quaked, the rocks were split, the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept, arose." What ? and shall we alone, of all the creatures in the world, be unconcerned at it ? Are our hearts more senseless than the earth ; more hard than rocks ; more stubborn than the graves ; more dead than rotten carcases ? How then is it possible for us, who caused all this grief and

trouble to him, not to be grieved and troubled for it ourselves? How is it possible for us to "look upon him whom we have thus pierced," and not "mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son; and be in bitterness for him, as he that is in bitterness for his first-born?" How is it possible for us to commemorate our Saviour's passion, as we do this day, and not break forth into this, or the like lamentation for it, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears!" that I might weep day and night for the death of my blessed Saviour, and for my sins which were the occasion of it: that ever I should have an hand in his blood, and be accessary to the murder of the Son of God! "The remembrance of it is grievous to me, the burthen of it is intolerable." What shall I do with myself? Why, this I am resolved to do: Let others laugh and be merry, if they can; for my part, I will weep, lament, and mourn myself into an utter hatred and detestation of those sins which caused my Saviour himself to grieve, lament, and die.

And that is the next thing which is necessary to our right observation of this day. We must not only mourn, but so mourn, for him "whom we have pierced," as to hate and abhor those sins by which we pierced him; otherwise we cannot be said to mourn, nor so much as to be sorry for him. And, if so, how few mourners hath Christ among us! for how few are there amongst us, but who are so far from hating, that they love and delight in those sins for which Christ suffered so much pain and sorrow! What else means that luxury and uncleanness, that debauchery and intemperance, that pride and self-conceitedness, that fraud, covetousness, hypocrisy, and indifferency for religion, which is so common, so general amongst us? Doth not this plainly argue, that, notwithstanding all that Christ hath done and suffered for us, we have still more love for our sins than we have for him; and still prefer the world, ourselves, our very lusts, before him?

But how shall we answer for this, when we come to stand before Christ's tribunal? Yea, what answer shall

we return unto him, now that we are in his special presence?

O blessed Jesu! we confess that we have nothing to plead for ourselves before thee. We adore and magnify thy name, that thou vouchsafedst to suffer for our sins; but we loathe, we abhor ourselves before thee, that we have not as yet sufficiently loathed and abhorred our sins for which thou wast pleased to suffer. We humbly crave thy pardon for what is past; and for the future beseech thee to endow us with that measure of thy grace and Holy Spirit, that, as thou wast pleased to offer up thyself for us, so we may offer up ourselves wholly unto thee, as we desire to do this day.

This, indeed, was one great end of our Saviour's death; and therefore this ought to be the great end of our commemoration of it at this time;—even that we may so mourn for our sins, which was the occasion of it, as to detest and hate them; and so detest and hate them, as to forsake and leave them, and for the future, live wholly unto him that died for us: without which, all our fasting and mourning, and whatsoever else we do this day, will avail us nothing. And certainly as the death of Christ is the most effectual means whereby we may, so it is the strongest argument in the world too why we should, forsake our sins, and turn to God. For, what? Shall the eternal Son of God condescend so far as to become man, in order to the expiation of our sins, and shall we yet continue in them? Shall he suffer reproach in his name, pain in his body, sorrow at his very heart, for them, and yet we continue in them? Yea, shall he be arraigned, condemned, and crucified for them too, and yet we continue in them? O “tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askalon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised be glad:” tell it not in hell, publish it not in the regions of darkness, lest the devil himself rejoice, and his fiends triumph, to see the Son of God dying for the sins of men, and yet the sons of men still living

in their sins! What is, if this be not, “to crucify to yourselves the Son of God afresh, and to put him to an open shame?” I know you cannot but all blame Judas for betraying, Pilate for condemning, and the Jews for crucifying your blessed Saviour. But, what? Will you act the same tragedy over again; and do that yourselves, which you so justly abhor in them? O that this might not be said of any one here present!

But, that you would all for the future be revenged of your sins, for the miseries they brought upon your Saviour, and serve them, as they served him,—even “crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts,” and give up yourselves to him, who gave himself for you on purpose that he might “redeem you from all iniquity, and purify you to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works:” that this may be the happy effect of your meeting together upon this sad and solemn occasion, give me leave to conclude with this brief exhortation to you:—

Men, brethren, and fathers, we have this day been looking upon him whom we have pierced, and, I hope, mourning for him; we have considered how much the eternal Son of God hath suffered in our natures, that we might not suffer in our own persons unto all eternity; how he became not only a man, but “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” destitute, afflicted, tormented, crucified, and all to satisfy God’s justice for our sins, and to purchase for us all things necessary to make us happy. Now, therefore, that you have heard so much of what the Son of God hath suffered for your sakes, you cannot surely but look upon yourselves as highly obliged to do all you can for his sake.

In his name, therefore, and for his sake, I beseech you all, ‘by his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by his death and burial,’ that you would doat no longer upon the toys and trifles of this lower world, but love, honour, and prefer him, your Saviour, before all things in it. For his sake I beseech you to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him,

avoiding whatsoever you know to be forbidden, and doing whatsoever is commanded by him. For his sake I beseech you "let your light so shine before men, that others may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." For his sake I beseech you to be constant in your devotions to God, stedfast in the profession of your faith, and zealous for that religion which he hath prescribed and settled amongst you. For his sake I beseech you to be sober and temperate in the use of his creatures, free and liberal in your contributions to his poor members, just and righteous in all your dealings; in short, I beseech you all, for Christ Jesus' sake, to live continually in the true faith and fear of Almighty God, in humble obedience to the king, and to all that are in authority under him, in brotherly love and charity to one another; and, when you have done all, put your full trust and confidence in Him, and Him alone, both for the pardon of your sins, and for the acceptance of your persons and performances before God.

Do but all this for his sake, and then I dare assure you, you will soon find the fruit and efficacy of his death and passion for you; for then he will be your advocate in heaven, and plead your cause before his Father; he will take care that your sins be all pardoned, and your obligations to punishment cancelled and made void; he will supply you continually with the influences of his Holy Spirit, and with all things necessary both for life and godliness; he will carry you through all the changes and chances of this mortal life, so as to make them all conspire and work together for your good; he will defend you against all the attempts and contrivances both of men and devils, so that the gates of hell itself shall never be able to prevail against you; and at last he will take you to himself, to live with him, to be kings, and priests, and glorified saints, in heaven; when all your mourning for him shall be turned into praises and adorations of him, and you will spend eternity itself in doing that, which I humbly desire you all to join with me in doing

at this time,—even in praising and magnifying the eternal God our Saviour, of whom we have been now speaking, in the words of the holy evangelist :—

“Unto him that loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and the Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

SERMON XVIII.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION THE CAUSE OF OUR JUSTIFICATION.

ROM. iv. 25.

“ Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

THE apostle is here speaking of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and positively asserts two things concerning him, much to be observed of all who hope to be saved by him. The first is, “that he was delivered for our offences;” he was delivered by his Father, “who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all¹.” He was delivered by himself, of his own accord; “no man,” saith he, “taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself².” He was delivered both by his Father and himself into the hands of the Jews; they delivered him to Pilate the Roman governor; Pilate, having unjustly condemned him, delivered him to the soldiers; the soldiers, after many horrid abuses put upon him, crucified him with two notorious malefactors, that were justly condemned and executed for their crimes. Jesus himself, the eternal Son of God, was thus delivered up to death, even to the death of the cross; and that doubtless for some sin too; for “death

¹ Rom. viii. 32.

² John x. 18.

is the wages" only "of sin;" therefore where there is no sin, there can be no death: but he could not be delivered for any sin of his own, for he had none; and, therefore, as the apostle here saith, "he was delivered for our offences," for the sins of mankind, as being of that nature in which he was so delivered. The malefactors, which were crucified with him, suffered each man for his own sins; but He suffered for the sins of other men, or rather for the sins of all men, and for ours among the rest. This the prophet long ago foretold, or, rather, did not foretel, but spake of it as a thing already done, because it was as certain to be done as if it had been done already; and it was looked upon as done from the beginning of the world, because God then said it should be; hence, I say, the prophet, speaking of Christ, saith, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all³." This also is the constant language of the New Testament. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures⁴." "He his own self bare our sins in his own body⁵." "He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God⁶." "He was made a curse for us⁷." "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity⁸." "He was made sin for us," or "an offering for our sins⁹." "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world¹." There are many such places in God's holy word, whereby we are fully assured, from himself, that his Son suffered death for us;—that death which he had threatened against us as sinners, and which we, therefore, must all have suffered in our own persons, if he had not suffered it in our stead.

³ Isa. liii. 5, 6.⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 3.⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 24.⁶ Ib. iii. 18.⁷ Gal. iii. 13.⁸ Tit. ii. 14.⁹ 2 Cor. v. 21.¹ 1 John ii. 2.

This I mention here, because it is necessary to our right understanding the other thing which the apostle here asserts of our blessed Saviour,—even that as “he was delivered for our offences, so he was raised again for our justification,” which is the thing I chiefly intend, and by his assistance shall endeavour at this time to explain, but could not so well have done it, unless I had premised at least so much concerning his death, upon which our justification is principally founded. I know that several men have undertaken to explain this doctrine several ways; and although I do not deny but most of them may be brought at last to meet in the same thing, yet the way that some go is so intricate and obscure, and that which others take seems at least so remote to the truth itself, that it is no easy matter to bring them together. For my part, in this, as in all other points, I shall keep close to the doctrine of our Church, as being fully persuaded that she in this, as in all other doctrines, delivers to us the true sense of God’s word, according to the interpretation that Christ’s Holy Catholic Church hath always put upon it, and therefore hath always taught and preached for this purpose; therefore I shall here consider two things:

I. What the Scriptures mean by justification, and how we are said to be justified?

II. In what sense Christ is here said to be raised again for our justification?

To understand the first, it will be first necessary to consider the term, or word itself, which we must know is a judicial word, a word taken from courts of judicature, where a man is said to be “justified” when he is acquitted, or declared to be just and innocent of the crime or crimes laid to his charge, and so not liable to the punishments which by the law are due to such crimes. And, therefore, “justification” is properly opposed to “condemnation;” so we find it often is in the Holy Scriptures themselves; as where it is said, if there be a controversy between men, that they come to judgment, that the judges may judge them, then

“they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked².” In the original it is והצדיקו את הצדיק והרשיעו את הרשע “they shall make the righteous to be righteous, and they shall make the wicked to be wicked;” that is, they shall declare, or pronounce, them to be so; and that is, their justifying the one, and condemning the other. Hence the Wise Man saith in the same words, “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord³.” Where we see “justification” and “condemnation” plainly opposed to one another. So they are by Christ himself, saying, “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned⁴.” To the same purpose is that of the apostle: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth⁵?” From whence it is evident, that the Holy Ghost useth this word “justification” to signify a man’s being accounted or declared not guilty of the faults he is charged with, but in that respect a just or righteous person; and that, too, before some judge, who, in our present case, is the supreme Judge of the world, Almighty God himself; and when he is pleased to discharge, or to declare a man free from the crimes that are laid against him, so as to account him a just or righteous person, then he is said to justify that man; and this is plainly the sense wherein our Church also useth this word in her Articles; for the title of the Eleventh Article is thus, ‘Of the justification of man,’ but the Article itself begins thus, ‘We are accounted righteous before God;’ which clearly shews that, in her sense, “to be justified” is the same with being “accounted righteous before God;” which I therefore observe, that you may not be mistaken in the sense of the word, as it is used by the Church, and by the Holy Ghost himself in his Holy Scriptures, like those who confound “justification” and “sanctification” together, as if they were one and the same thing;

² Deut. xxv. 1.

⁴ Matt. xii. 37.

³ Prov. xvii. 15.

⁵ Rom. viii. 33, 34.

although the Scriptures plainly distinguish them: "justification" being God's act in us, whereby we are accounted righteous by him, and shall be declared to be so at the judgment of the great day.

But, as it is in Job; "How can man be" thus "justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman⁶?" How can he that is a sinner be accounted righteous by the most righteous Judge of the whole world? This, I confess, is a mystery which we should never have found out, nor so much as thought of, but that God himself hath revealed it to us in his own word, which, as it is the only ground we have to believe it, so it is the only rule we must go by in explaining it to you. According to which I shall endeavour to give you as clear an account of it as I can, in these following propositions:—

1. No man is by nature righteous in himself. This we are fully assured of by the word of God, where we find, that the first man God ever made sinned against him by eating of the fruit which God had forbidden him to eat of; and that all men being then contained in him, all likewise sinned in him, and became liable and prone to do so in their own persons. He, by eating that forbidden fruit, poisoned his blood, and corrupted the whole nature of man; insomuch that all that ever did, or ever shall, proceed naturally from him are conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, and, therefore, afterwards do nothing else by nature but conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity; "For as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned⁷." "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one⁸;" or, as St. Paul renders it, "There is none righteous, no, not one⁹." "There is not" one righteous, not "a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not¹⁰." "For there is no man that sinneth not¹¹." And "if

⁶ Job xxv. 4.

⁷ Rom. v. 12.

⁸ Ps. xiv. 3.

⁹ Rom. iii. 10.

¹⁰ Eccles. vii. 20.

¹¹ 1 Kings viii. 46.

any man say that he hath no sin, he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him¹." For the law hath concluded all under sin, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God²." "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God³." And so are all under the curse which God hath denounced against every one "that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them⁴." But this no mere man ever yet did, or ever will do; and therefore none ever was or ever can be perfectly righteous in himself, while he is upon earth.

And as the Scripture thus "concludeth all under sin⁵," so all men find it true by their own experience; for who can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin⁶?" No man except Christ could ever truly say it; for all that have any sense of the difference between good and evil cannot but be conscious to themselves that they have done evil, more evil than good,—at least, not so much good as they might and ought to have done,—since they came into the world. If I should ask all here present, one by one, whether they do not know themselves to have done something they ought not to have done, or else not to have done something which they ought, I dare say every man's conscience would force him to confess it; and, whether we be sensible of it or no, I am sure this is the state of all mankind by nature. There never was a mere man upon the face of the earth free from sin, and, therefore, never any one that was righteous in himself, but every man, woman, and child, may truly pray with David, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified⁷."

2. No man can of himself do any thing whereby he can merit, or deserve, to be accounted righteous before God. This I lay down as my second proposition, be-

¹ 1 John i. 8.

⁴ Gal. iii. 10.

² Rom. iii. 19.

⁵ Ib. 22.

⁷ Ps. cxliii. 2.

³ Ib. 23.

⁶ Prov. xx. 9.

cause some have conceited that, though all be by nature sinners, yet some may do such good works, and perform such obedience to the law of God, whereby they may deserve to be accounted righteous men: this our Church denieth, saying in the aforesaid Article, ‘We are accounted righteous before God, not for our own works or deservings;’ and it is as contrary to the plain and express words of Scripture, where it is said once and again, “By the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified⁸.” And I cannot but wonder how such a conceit could ever come into any man’s head; for, seeing all men are by nature sinners, whatsoever any man doeth by his own natural strength must needs be sin. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit; a poisoned fountain cannot send out wholesome streams: as the man is, so are all his actions; if he be sinful, so are they; they are not done as God willed and commanded them to be done, and therefore, as our Church saith, ‘We doubt not but they have the nature of sin⁹.’ And, by consequence, to say that such a man may be justified by any thing that he himself doeth, is the same, in effect, as to say, a man may be justified by his sins, or he may be accounted righteous for his unrighteous deeds;—which is next door to a contradiction. And suppose a man in doing such works acts not by his own natural strength, but by the grace of God; and suppose, again, he doeth never so many good works by it, what then? He doeth no more than what he was bound in duty to do. How then can he deserve any thing by it? and how so much, that God should therefore account him a righteous man, notwithstanding the many evil works that he is guilty of? And besides, if he did them by the grace of God, God is not beholden to him, but he is beholden to God for them: how then can he merit any thing from God by them? Did ever any man pay his debts, by owing more; or deserve his creditor should account him no debtor, because he runs more upon his

⁸ Gal. ii. 16. Rom. iii. 20.

⁹ Article XIII.

score? What a man doeth by the grace of God, he is bound to thank God for it; but he cannot in reason expect that God should therefore account him a righteous man, because he hath done one more righteous act by his assistance. Suppose he had done ten thousand good works; and suppose—that which cannot be truly supposed,—that they are all perfectly good; yet, after all, the man is still a sinner, so long as he is guilty of any one sin; as, be sure, the best men are of many; for any one sin denominates a man a sinner; and, so long as such, he cannot be accounted righteous, or justified, by any thing that he himself doeth, how great or how good soever it may seem to be; “for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all¹,” and if guilty, the law condemns him: as if a man be accused of ten crimes before a judge, as suppose of ten felonious acts, although he be cleared of nine of them, yet if he be found guilty of any one, he is a felon, and must bear the punishment of the law. How then can he, who is guilty of any, much less if guilty of all, as the apostle speaks, be justified before God? Can a man be guilty, and not guilty, at the same time; condemned and justified; be found a sinner, and yet no sinner, but righteous, and that, too, in the eyes of God himself? So absurd and ridiculous a thing it is for any to imagine that any man can do any thing of himself, whereby he can be justified, or accounted righteous, before God.

3. Notwithstanding all this, there have been some men in all ages, and doubtless there are some now, whom God himself hath accounted righteous; for we find several in the Holy Scriptures expressly called so by himself. He calls Abel, “righteous Abel².” So Noah³, Lot⁴, Job⁵, Simeon⁶, Joseph to whom the blessed Virgin was espoused⁷, and Joseph of Arimathea⁸, are all declared by God himself to be “righteous.” Za-

¹ James ii. 10.

² Matt. xxiii. 35. Heb. xi. 4.

³ Gen. vi. 9.

⁴ 2 Pet. ii. 7.

⁵ Job i. 1. 8; ii. 3.

⁶ Luke ii. 25.

⁷ Matt. i. 19.

⁸ Luke xxiii. 50, 51.

charias and Elisabeth were “both righteous before God⁹.” Our blessed Saviour tells his disciples that “many prophets and righteous men” had desired to see those things which they saw¹⁰. Thus all along, both in the Old and New Testament, there is a frequent mention made of “righteous men,” men that were righteous in the account and esteem of God himself. Otherwise he himself, be sure, would never have called them so.

But how can these things be? “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right¹¹?” Hath not he himself said, “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord¹².” How, then, doth he do that himself, which he abominates in others? These, which he calls “righteous,” were all the children of Adam; they were all men, wicked and sinful men in themselves, guilty of original, and guilty of many actual sins: how, then, can he justify them, account and declare them to be “righteous;” to be such as he himself knew they were not in themselves? This is the great mystery to be now unfolded; for which end we must lay down this as our next proposition.

4. Whosoever, therefore, are thus accounted righteous by God must be so accounted from some other righteousness than their own in themselves; for it is plain, as I have shewn, that no man hath any righteousness of his own in himself, whereby he can be truly accounted righteous; and it is as plain that God himself accounts some men righteous. From whence one of these two things must of necessity follow: either, first, that God passeth a wrong judgment upon some men, by accounting them righteous, when they really are not so; which to say, is downright blasphemy: or else, in the second place, that there is some other righteousness in the world, which men may be so interested in as to be truly accounted righteous by it, although they have none in themselves whereby they

⁹ Luke i. 6.

¹¹ Gen. xviii. 25.

¹⁰ Matt. xiii. 17.

¹² Prov. xvii. 15.

can ever be so. And seeing the first cannot, without manifest absurdity, this other consequence from the aforesaid premisses must of necessity be granted; and then the whole mystery of our justification will lie plain and easy before us. For although, as the apostle saith, "God justifieth the ungodly¹," yet if those who are ungodly in themselves can any other way procure to themselves true and perfect righteousness, God may justly account and declare them righteous for that, though not for any thing in themselves.

5. This other righteousness which men are capable of obtaining to themselves, whereby to be accounted righteous before God, is the righteousness of Christ. All the wit of man could never find out any other; neither could this be ever found out but only by divine Revelation; whereby we are fully assured that God himself, of his infinite wisdom and goodness, hath made this way, whereby we may be justified before him, notwithstanding that we are not perfectly just and righteous in ourselves, or by any thing that we ourselves can do. But, to make this as clear and manifest as I can, it will be necessary to proceed gradually; for which end, therefore, we may observe,

(1.) Jesus Christ was perfectly righteous in himself. This none can doubt of that read and believe God's holy word, where he is often called "righteous²," which he could never have been, if he had not been so in himself, there being no other righteousness which he could possibly have but his own. And besides, it is expressly said, that he "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth³," and that "in him is no sin⁴," and if there was no sin, there could be nothing else but righteousness in him. But I need not insist upon this, seeing no man could ever convince him of sin⁵. And, therefore, all must acknowledge him to be altogether righteous. I shall only add, that he was thus perfectly righteous and obedient, not only through the whole

¹ Rom. iv. 5.

² Isa. liii. 11. 1 John iii. 1.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 22.

⁴ 1 John iii. 5.

⁵ John viii. 46.

course of his life, but “unto death itself, even the death of the cross⁶.”

(2.) This righteousness of Christ was the righteousness not only of man, but God himself; for he being both God and man in one Person, whatever he did, being done by a divine Person, must needs be a divine act, the act of God. And, therefore, his righteousness is all along in Scripture called the “righteousness of God.” As where St. Paul, speaking of the gospel, saith, that, “Therein is the righteousness of God revealed⁷.” And afterwards he saith, “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all⁸.” And again; “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness⁹.” Where he doth not only call the righteousness of Christ the end, or full accomplishment, of the law, but he calls it “the righteousness of God,” and opposeth it to a man’s own righteousness. And so he doth too, where he desires to be found “not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God¹.” And this is that which Christ himself would have us seek before all things, because, without this, all things else will stand us in no stead, saying, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness²,” his, not our own; but his, so as to get it to be our own. And as all the righteousness which Christ performed in his life was the righteousness of God, so was that, too, which he performed in obedience to the divine will at his death. His life was the life of God, and his death was the death of God. So saith his beloved apostle, “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his

⁶ Phil. ii. 8.

⁹ Rom. x. 3, 4.

⁷ Rom. i. 17.

¹ Phil. iii. 9.

⁸ Ib. iii. 21, 22.

² Matt. vi. 33.

life for us³." Hence, the blood he then shed is called "the blood of God⁴," because, although he laid down the life and shed the blood only of his human nature, yet that nature being at the same time united to his divine Person, the life he laid down, and the blood he shed, was the life and the blood of God himself; which I therefore observe here, because the main stress of our justification lies upon it, as we shall see more presently. But for that purpose we must farther observe, that,

(3.) All the righteousness that Christ performed upon earth, whether in his life or at his death, was wholly and solely for us, and upon our account, in whose nature he performed it; for, seeing it was only for us that he took our flesh upon him, whatsoever he did in it must needs be for us only. He himself had no occasion or need of it for himself, but only as he had undertaken to be our Redeemer and Saviour, and so with respect to us and our salvation. He, as God, was not bound to submit to those laws which he had made, not for himself, but for men to observe. And as man, although it became him to "fulfil all righteousness," and perform perfect obedience to the whole law as he did, yet he was not bound to perform divine obedience such as his was, the obedience of a divine Person to laws made only for men, which were not capable, and, therefore, he could not be obliged to perform such obedience to them as that was. So that the obedience of his whole life was more than was or could be required of mere men: and so was the last act of it,—his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross; for though all the men in the world had died eternally, that could have been no more than the death of so many finite persons; whereas, his was the death of a Person that was infinite, and so was of infinite worth and value for all those for whom he suffered it; as was likewise all he did through the whole course of his life: by which means he really merited pardon, right-

³ 1 John iii. 16.

⁴ Acts xx. 28.

eousness, and salvation for us, for whose sake only he did, whatsoever he did, in our flesh, which he took upon him only for that purpose. This is the true ground or reason of all his merits, or of his meriting so much as he hath done for us, because he did more than we were bound to do for ourselves, and he did it all for us; he was born for us, he lived for us, and he died for us; so that, as our Church expresseth it in her Homilies, ‘Christ is now the righteousness of all them that truly believe in him; he for them paid their ransom by his death, he for them fulfilled the law in his life⁵.’

Hence he is said “to be made of God to us wisdom and righteousness⁶,” “and he hath made him to be sin,” or a sin-offering, “for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him⁷,” in him, that is, by virtue of that righteousness which is in him, and, therefore, he is called, “The Lord our righteousness⁸.” And he himself, whose Spirit, as St. Peter saith, was in the prophets, saith by his prophet Isaiah, “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord⁹.” So that one may surely say, “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength¹,” “for he that hath clean hands and a pure heart shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation²,” that is, from God his Saviour, whom David therefore calls “The God of my righteousness³.” And the same royal prophet, as St. Paul saith, “describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin⁴,” for where he imputes no sin, he imputes righteousness, as the apostle here argues. But there is no other righteousness that can be imputed to us but the righteousness of Christ, that which he hath merited for us. And,

⁵ Sermon I. of Salvation.

⁷ 2 Cor. v. 21.

¹ Ib. xlv. 24.

⁸ Jer. xxiii. 6.

² Ps. xxiv. 5.

⁴ Rom. iv. 6—8.

⁶ 1 Cor. i. 30.

⁹ Isa. liv. 17.

³ Ps. iv. 1.

therefore, it is by this, and this only, that we can be justified or accounted righteous, as our Church hath declared in the Article of Justification, saying, 'We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ⁵.'

(4.) Although it is sufficient for all, and all are capable of it, yet none have this righteousness of Christ actually reckoned, or imputed, to them, except they truly believe in him; but all that do so are justified, or accounted righteous, by it; faith being the means, or true instrument, as it were, whereby we lay hold on it, and apply it to ourselves for that purpose; as appears from the word of God himself, where it is plainly asserted, that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth ⁶;" that "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness ⁷;" that "God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus ⁸." "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law ⁹." "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ ¹⁰;" "and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses ¹¹." But it would be endless to reckon up all the places where God hath been pleased to reveal this to us: I shall only add one or two more. St. Paul, discoursing of the Gentiles and Jews, saith, "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of right-

⁵ Article xI.

⁸ Ib. iii. 25, 26.

⁶ Rom. x. 4.

⁹ Ib. iii. 28.

¹¹ Acts xiii. 39.

⁷ Ib. 10.

¹⁰ Gal. i. 16.

eousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone¹." Where we may observe, not only that no man can ever attain to righteousness any other way but only by faith, and that it is therefore called "the righteousness of faith;" but we may observe, likewise, from hence, that this doctrine was a great stumbling-block to the Jews. And so it is to some Christians at this day: men would very fain find something in themselves whereby they might be accounted righteous before God, and are very loth to be beholden to another, no, not to Christ himself, for it. But let them find another way if they can. For my part, I desire to say with St. Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: and that I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith²." And this, I am sure, is the doctrine of our Church, delivered in the Article above-mentioned in these words, 'We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings.'

But, to understand this more fully, it will be necessary to consider what is here meant by "faith," or "believing in Christ;" and then what hand it hath in our justification, or in what sense we are said to be justified by it. As for the first, I know that several men have given several definitions of faith, of faith, which we speak of in this place, that whereby we are said to be justified and saved. I shall not trouble you with the private opinions of other men, much less with my own, if I had any about it, but shall give you the sense of our Church, and of the Holy Scripture itself, concerning it. Our Church, therefore, in the first part of "The Homily, or Sermon, of Faith," speaking of a quick and lively faith, such as the gospel requires, in

¹ Rom. ix. 30—32.

² Phil. iii. 8, 9.

order to our justification, saith, that 'this is not only the common belief of the articles of our faith, but it is also a true trust and confidence of the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and a stedfast hope of all good things to be received at God's hand,' where, as in several other places of her Homilies, she plainly makes the object of our faith to be all the good things that God hath promised in Christ; and the act itself to be a true trust and confidence of God's mercy through him, for the performance of all those promises. And that this is the proper sense of the word, as it is used by the Holy Ghost in Scripture, appears from the description which he himself hath given of it, where he saith, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen³." "It is the substance of things hoped for;" that is, whereas God hath been pleased to promise to mankind in his Son Jesus Christ all the good things we can desire and hope for, according to the same promise, to make us happy, faith is so true a trust and confidence in Christ for those things so promised, that it is the very substance of them, it causeth them, in a manner, to subsist in us, and puts us into the actual possession of them; so that by believing, or, as it is expressed in the same chapter, "embracing" the said promises, we enjoy the full benefit of them, and have them really fulfilled to us: and it is "the evidence of things not seen," that is, whereas God hath revealed many things to us in his holy word, which we do not as yet see by the eye either of sense or reason, yet, having God's word for them, we are as fully persuaded of them, and they seem as evident and certain to us, as if we saw them plainly before our eyes.

Now, according to this the true notion of faith, described by the Holy Ghost himself, as we hope for pardon and justification from Christ, according to the promises which God hath made us in him, upon our believing in him for it, we are accordingly pardoned

³ Heb. xi. 1.

and justified by him, because we are thereby actually stated in him, and made partakers of him, and of all that he hath merited for that purpose; as the apostle saith, "We are partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end ⁴." So that if we continue stedfastly to believe in Christ, we are thereby partakers of him; and if of him, then, be sure, of all that is in him, as he is our Mediator and Redeemer. Hence they who truly believe in him are said to be "one with him ⁵," to be "joined to him ⁶," to be "in him ⁷," "to dwell in him ⁸," "to abide in him ⁹," "as a branch abideth in the vine ¹⁰," and a member in the body, for "he is the head of the body, the church ¹¹," and believers are all members, "every one in particular ¹²," yea, they are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones ¹³," and so are united and joined to him, as a wife is to her husband ¹.

This is that mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church, betwixt Christ and all that truly believe in him. By their believing in him they are thus united to him; and by virtue of this their union to him they partake of all his merits: as a branch partakes of the sap and juice that is in the stock; as a member partakes of the spirit that is in the head; and as a wife partakes of all the honours, estate, and privileges of her husband; so doth a believer partake of all the merits of Christ, by reason of his being joined to him, and abiding always in him. He was crucified with him ², and he rose again with him ³. He was in him, and with him, in all he did or suffered; and so he in him satisfied God's justice for his sins, he in him fulfilled all righteousness, and therefore he in him may justly be accounted righteous before God himself. He cannot but be so, upon that very account—because he is in Christ; "for there is no condemnation to them

⁴ Heb. iii. 14.⁵ John xvii. 21.⁶ 1 Cor. vi. 17.⁷ 2 Cor. v. 17. Rom. xvi. 7. Phil. i. 1.⁸ 1 John iv. 13.⁹ 1 John iii. 6.¹⁰ John xv. 4—6.¹¹ Col. i. 18.¹² 1 Cor. xii. 27.¹³ Eph. v. 30.¹ Ib. 23. 31, 32.² Gal. ii. 20.³ Col. iii. 1.

which are in Christ Jesus⁴." And if they be not condemned, they must needs be justified; and if they be justified, or accounted righteous, before God, it must be by that righteousness they have in him in whom they are so, for they have no other which can be truly so accounted; but in him they have most absolute and perfect righteousness, because his was so; and being his in whom they are by their believing in him, it is reckoned theirs, too, as effectually, to all intents and purposes, as if it had been performed in their own persons.

By this, therefore, we may clearly see into the manner of our justification by faith in Christ; for it is not, as some have fondly imagined, as if we could be wise by another's wisdom, or healthful by another's health, which we are no way concerned or interested in; for we are accounted righteous by the righteousness of Christ, not as it is in him and so another's, but as it is our own in him. We, upon our believing on him, have, by virtue of God's word and promise, an absolute right and title to it, so that he is called, as I shewed before, "The Lord our righteousness:" and as he was the righteousness of God in himself, we are "the righteousness of God in him⁵," and he was "made righteousness to us⁶." And if it was made to us, then it is ours. To this purpose that passage of St. Paul before quoted is very remarkable, where he desires to "be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith⁷." Where we may observe two things: first, that he desires to be found in Christ; the only way, as I have shewn, to have righteousness or any thing else in him. Secondly, that he speaks here of a two-fold righteousness, one his own in himself; and, to distinguish it from the other, he calls it his own, which is after the law: this he disclaims, and desires to have the other, which is after the gospel, the "righteous-

⁴ Rom. viii. 1.

⁶ 1 Cor. i. 30.

⁵ 2 Cor. v. 21.

⁷ Phil. iii. 9.

ness of God by faith:" this he desires to have, that this also might be his own, though not in himself, as the other was, yet his own in Christ. And if he had it, as, be sure, he had, it must needs be his own; otherwise he could not be said to have it. And seeing they who believe in Christ are thus vested in his righteousness, so as to have it for their own, they may well be justified, or accounted righteous, by it; which otherwise they could not be. For as no man hath any righteousness in himself which can bear God's test, and be truly esteemed so in his account and judgment, so no man can be accounted righteous by any righteousness but his own. If it be not his own, he hath nothing to do with it, and therefore cannot be righteous by it; and if he be not righteous, he cannot justly be accounted so. And that is the reason why, notwithstanding all the righteousness that is in Christ, they who do not believe in him cannot be justified by him, because, not being united to him by faith, they have no interest in him, or his righteousness. Though it be in him, it is not theirs in him; and therefore they cannot be esteemed righteous by it, no more than as if there was none at all in him. Whereas they who, by their believing in him, are possessed of Christ's righteousness as their own in him, they may truly plead it at God's judgment-seat, and need not fear but they shall be justified by it, according to the tenor of the new covenant: but so, that they, who are thus accepted in the Beloved⁸, must ascribe it to the infinite goodness and free grace of God, who might justly, if he had pleased, according to the first covenant, have exacted perfect righteousness and obedience from them, performed by every one in his own person; or, for want of that, have condemned them to everlasting punishment.

But here we must observe, that all who being thus in Christ are justified by his merit, they are also sanctified by the Spirit that is in him. As there is "no

⁸ Eph. i. 1.

condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," so they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit¹;" and, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature²;" therefore "a new creature," because in him, who is "made to us wisdom and sanctification," as well as "righteousness and redemption;" and all that are of him partake of all that is in him; of his wisdom to make them wise, and his grace to make them holy in themselves, as well as of his righteousness and merit to justify them before God. And seeing it is by believing that we are thus interested in him, therefore we are said to be "sanctified" as well as "justified" by faith; for Christ himself said, "that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me³." And St. Paul tells us, that "true faith works by love⁴." But "love is the fulfilling of the law⁵;" and, therefore, whosoever hath true faith, he must needs do good works,—all manner of good works that he is capable of doing; otherwise he may be confident that he doth not believe as he ought in Christ, that his faith is not that true and lively faith that will bear a man out at God's judgment-seat; for, as our Church hath rightly declared, 'Good works do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith; insomuch, that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit⁶.'

And this is that which St. James means, where he treats upon this subject, wherein some have thought he contradicts St. Paul; but that is a great mistake: for St. Paul saith, that "we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law⁷." St. James doth not say, that we are justified by the works of the law without faith, he only saith, that "a man is justified by works, and not by faith only⁸;" where he plainly asserts our justification by faith, and only denies that we are justified by faith *only*, or by such a faith as is *alone*,

¹ Rom. viii. 1.² 2 Cor. v. 17.³ Acts xxvi. 18.⁴ Gal. v. 6.⁵ Rom. xiii. 10.⁶ Article xii.⁷ Rom. iii. 28.⁸ James ii. 24.

without good works. It is of such a faith he speaks all along in that chapter, saying, that “faith without works is dead, being alone⁹,” and, that Abraham had works as well as faith: that “faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect¹:” but that he was justified only by his faith; and “the Scripture,” saith he, “was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness².”* And this is that which St. Paul saith, and the Holy Scriptures confirm all along, as we have shewn,—even that we are justified only by faith; but we are justified only by such a faith as produceth good works; so that no man is accounted righteous by his faith in Christ, unless it be such a faith whereby he is likewise made sincerely righteous in himself. Though after all it is not for his own righteousness in himself, or his own good works, that he is, or can be, accounted righteous before God, but only by the righteousness which he hath in Christ; there being no other that is truly and perfectly so in God’s account. And therefore we may conclude this with the words of our Church, whereby she hath determined the whole matter in few terms, saying, that ‘justifying faith doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God to be joined with faith, in every man that is justified, but it shutteth them out from the office of justifying³.’

All that I have hitherto discoursed upon this subject will receive great light from comparing the several states of mankind by nature and by grace together. Let us, therefore, take a short view of each of them. At first, we know God made only one man,—Adam; but he made him so, that all men that were ever to be in the world should, by successive generation, proceed from him, and therefore were all then in him. But soon after Adam was made, before any one as yet proceeded from him, God, having planted a garden, gave

⁹ James ii. 17. 26.¹ Ib. 21, 22.² Ib. 23.³ Sermon I. of Salvation.

him liberty to eat of any fruit in it, except one tree ; and, if he ate of that, he told him plainly, “ that he should surely die ⁴. ” Adam, notwithstanding, ate of the fruit of that tree, and so sinned against God, and made himself subject to the death which God had threatened, and therefore could not in justice but inflict upon him ; and all mankind being then in him, all sinned in him, all were corrupted with sin, and made obnoxious to death by it : upon which, our most gracious Creator was pleased, of his infinite grace and goodness, to raise up another Adam, his only-begotten Son, to take the nature of man upon him, as fully and wholly as it was in the first Adam, who therefore sanctified the nature of man again, by assuming it into his own divine Person ; and in it performed perfect obedience to the whole law of God ; and in it also suffered the death which God had threatened : and so satisfied his justice, which required the fulfilling of his word. Now, that particular human persons might receive the benefit of what he thus did and suffered in their nature, he was pleased so to order it, that, as all men proceed from Adam by natural generation, so all, who would believe in him—the second Adam—should be regenerate and born again of him by that Holy Spirit which proceedeth from him ⁵ ; and so should be looked upon as really in him as they were in the first Adam, their nature in general being equally in both : hence, therefore, all who truly believe in him, as they incurred death in the first Adam, they suffered it in the second ; as they were corrupted in the one, they are sanctified in the other ; and as Adam’s sin, so Christ’s righteousness, is imputed to them : it is reckoned theirs, to all effects, as much as if it had been performed in their own person, as it was in their own nature united to a divine Person ; and so they are justified by the second Adam the same way as they were condemned in the first, and made righteous by the one, as they were sinners by the other ; as we are

⁴ Gen. ii. 16, 17.

⁵ John i. 12 ; iii. 5.

taught by the infallible Spirit of God himself, saying, by his apostle, "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous⁶:" which, I think, makes this whole doctrine as plain and certain as words can make it; and, therefore, we need not insist any longer upon the explication of it.

But I must not forget what I promised to shew in the last place, even in what sense, or wherefore, Christ is said to be "raised again for our justification:" which may be soon dispatched; for Christ having in our nature been obedient, even unto death itself, and so fulfilled the law, and satisfied the justice of God for us, it was necessary for our justification that he should still continue to apply his merits to us for that purpose; which he could not have done, if he had not risen again, and gone up to heaven, there as our advocate to appear in the presence of God for us⁷. And therefore St. Paul lays the main stress of our justification upon this, saying, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us⁸." "Yea rather, that is risen again:" implying, that all which he had done and suffered in our nature would have stood us in no stead, if he had not risen again, and ascended to heaven to make intercession, by the virtue of what he had so done and suffered for us; without which, notwithstanding all that he hath merited for us, no man could ever have been justified or saved by him; for, as the apostle saith, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them⁹." And, therefore, it may well be said, that, as

⁶ Rom. v. 18, 19.

⁸ Rom. viii. 33, 34.

⁷ Heb. ix. 24.

⁹ Heb. vii. 25.

he "was delivered for our offences, he was raised again for our justification."

Now from this doctrine, thus briefly explained, we may easily observe, that it is so far from encouraging men in vice and wickedness, as some have ridiculously imagined, that it is the greatest encouragement in the world to virtue and good works. No man in his right wits can be emboldened by this to continue in his sin, or the neglect of his duty to God, seeing that, although he can be justified only by his faith in Christ, yet he cannot be justified by any faith but that whereby he is sanctified also at the same time; though he can be accounted righteous before God only by the righteousness which he hath in Christ, yet he can never be accounted so in him, unless he be made sincerely righteous in himself: for he is not in him: if he was, he could not but be a new and holy creature; and all that are not so, may be confident they do not believe in Christ aright. Whatsoever they may fancy, their faith is nought; it is not a quick and lively, but a dead and rotten faith; or, rather, it is not faith at all, such as the gospel requires; and so they will find at the last day, when all men shall be judged according to their works, as the Judge himself hath foretold us¹. They who have not fed the hungry, nor clothed the naked; they who have lived all along in sin, and neglected their duty to God and their neighbour; they shall be condemned as criminals, as having lived in the continual breach of God's laws; which they could not have done, if they had truly believed in Christ. But they who exercise themselves continually in good works, in works of piety, justice, and charity, they shall be justified, though not for their works, yet by their faith in Christ, which will be itself justified and demonstrated to have been true and right, in that it produced such works.

But why do I speak of that? This doctrine is so far from encouraging men in sin, that it is the strongest

¹ Matt. xxv. 34, &c.

motive, and the greatest encouragement, we can have to do good. We cannot but be all sensible of our own natural weakness, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, and, therefore, if we look no farther than ourselves, we may justly despair of ever doing any good work. Our only support and comfort is, that the grace of Christ is sufficient for us; that in him we have both righteousness and strength; such strength, that “we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us².” But although we can do all things by him, yet seeing it is we that do it, we, corrupt and frail creatures, we cannot but be conscious to ourselves that, notwithstanding his assistance, we can do nothing as we ought,—nothing so exactly as the law requires; but, do what we can, we still come short of it, both in not doing so much good as we might, and in doing nothing so well as we should. So that should God be extreme to mark what we do amiss, he may justly condemn us for something that is amiss in the best action we ever did. But why, then, should we trouble our heads about doing good, when after all we can do nothing that is truly so; but, when we have done all we can, we are still but where we were, guilty and obnoxious to the judgment of God? For my own part, could I have no other righteousness but my own, no other but what I could attain to in myself, I should never think it worth my while to look after any at all, for I am sure I could never attain it. But when we consider that, although we cannot have any in ourselves, yet we may have perfect righteousness in Christ our Saviour; and, if we sincerely endeavour to be as righteous as we can, and believe in him for it, he will make up the defect of ours with his righteousness, so that all we do shall be acceptable to God through him³, and we ourselves also accounted righteous in him, before the Judge of the whole world, this must needs inspire us with holy desires, and make us “stedfast, unmoveable, always

² Phil. iv. 13.³ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord⁴."

Wherefore let us now resolve to take this course, seeing the eternal Son of God is become our Saviour, our all-sufficient, our almighty Saviour; seeing he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, let us make it our constant care and study to offend God no more, but to walk in all his commandments, and in all his ordinances, to the utmost of our power, blameless; but, when we have done all we can, let us believe and trust only in our ever blessed Saviour both for the pardon of our sins, and for God's acceptance of us as righteous in him; and then we need not fear; for, being justified by faith, we shall have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

SERMON XIX.

CHRIST'S ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN PREPARATORY TO
OURS.

JOHN xiv. 2, 3.

“In my Father’s house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

OUR blessed Saviour having acquainted his disciples that he must now leave them, and observing that they were much concerned and troubled at it, he takes occasion from thence to direct them how to keep their hearts from being too much cast down at the apprehension of that or any other trouble that might befall them in this world,—even by exercising their faith on him ; “Let not your heart be troubled,” saith he : “ye believe in God, believe also in me.” Whereby he hath plainly discovered two things to us : first, that it is his will and pleasure that his disciples should never suffer their hearts to be ruffled or discomposed at any trouble or affliction they meet with here below, but that they should walk through all the changes and chances of this mortal life with an even frame and temper of mind, equally ready to do, or to suffer, whatsoever God shall see good to require of them, or lay upon them, saying, “Let not your heart be troubled ;” and then, secondly, that the most effectual means to do this is

always to live by faith in God, and in him; "Ye believe in God," saith he, "believe also in me." As if he had said, Ye believe in God; ye believe that he made, and that he governs, the world, and orders and disposeth of all things in it according to his own pleasure; and you trust on him to preserve you from evil, and to supply you with whatsoever is really good for you. And as you thus believe in God, believe also in me. Believe that I am the Son of God, and am come into the world on purpose to save sinners: that I am able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by me; and therefore put your whole trust and confidence on me for the pardon of all your sins, for the healing of all your infirmities, for the strengthening you against all temptations, for the making your sincere though imperfect duties acceptable unto God, and so for the bringing you at last to heaven. And do not fear nor doubt in the least but I will do it for you, notwithstanding that I am now to depart for a while from you; for I am only going home to my Father's house, where I will take as much care of you as if I was still present with you, if you do but continue to believe in me. And, therefore, let not your heart be troubled at my departure from you, nor for any thing else that may befall you in this world; but as ye believe God, believe also in me, your Saviour and Redeemer. And then he adds, for their greater comfort and encouragement against all the troubles and difficulties they should meet with here below, "In my Father's house are many mansions," &c.

Which words, being uttered by Christ himself, afford so much matter of solid and substantial joy to his disciples, that did we but rightly understand, firmly believe, and duly consider them as we ought, we should never suffer our spirits to sink under any burden that is laid upon us in our journey towards heaven, but should bear it not only with patience, but with cheerfulness and alacrity of mind, so as to esteem it a blessing, rather than a cross and trouble to us: for which purpose, therefore, I shall first explain them to you in

the same order wherein our blessed Lord was pleased to pronounce them; and then shew how much a firm belief and due consideration of them will conduce to the end for which our Saviour spake them,—even to the keeping our hearts from being troubled.

First, therefore, our Lord saith, “In my Father’s house,” that is, in heaven, which in Holy Writ is usually called by such names as signify some certain place where people use to dwell together: sometimes it is called “a kingdom;” as where our Saviour saith, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom¹”; and, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God².” Sometimes it is called “a country,” as in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly³.” Sometimes “a city,” as in the same place, where it is said, “He hath prepared for them a city:” and elsewhere, “For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come⁴.” Sometimes it is called “the habitation,” or “house of God,” as where Moses enjoins the people to say in their prayers to God, “Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven⁵.” And to the same purpose the prophet Isaiah saith, “Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory⁶.” And so in my text our Saviour calls it his “Father’s house,” which is the same in effect with the house, or habitation, of God; but he calls it peculiarly his “Father’s house,” the better to confirm his disciples in their hopes and expectations from him, by assuring them that he was not to go to any strange place, where he had no relation, interest, or acquaintance, and so could do them no service; but that he was going to his own Father’s house, where he was sure to have all the favour that he could desire either for himself or them, as being the only-begotten Son of the Master of the house, who once and again had publicly declared the great love and kindness he had for him, saying of him, “This

¹ Luke xii. 32.

² Matt. vi. 33.

³ Heb. xi. 16.

⁴ Heb. xiii. 14.

⁵ Deut. xxvi. 15.

⁶ Isa. lxiii. 16.

is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased⁷;" and, seeing he was now to go to this his Father's house, to live with him, and to have his ear upon all occasions, his disciples might be confident that he would be able still to assist and protect them, and to procure as much, or rather much more grace and favour for them when he was gone from them, than if he had still continued with them: and this seems to be the reason why our blessed Lord calls it in a particular manner his "Father's house."

But wherefore is heaven here called "the house of God," or "of the Father?" Many reasons may be alleged for it, some of which I shall touch upon and explain, so that you may understand something of the purity, the pleasantness, and the excellency of that blessed place, at least so much as to make you think long till you get thither.

First, therefore, it is called "God's house," because it is of his making or building, as St. Paul observes, saying, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens⁸." And in the Epistle to the Hebrews Abraham's hopes of heaven are expressed by his looking for a city "which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God⁹." And in the Old Testament we often read, that "the Lord made the heavens¹," yea, it was the first thing he ever made; for "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth²." First, heaven, and then earth; where, as all along in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for heaven is שמים, of the dual number, to signify both the material and the immaterial heavens; the place where the sun, moon, and stars, move and shine; and likewise the place where the holy angels live, and praise, and enjoy God, which, to distinguish it from the other, is sometimes called "the heaven of heavens³,"

⁷ Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5.

⁸ 2 Cor. v. 1.

⁹ Heb. xi. 10.

¹ Ps. xcvi. 5; cii. 25. Isa. xlii. 5; xliv. 25.

² Gen. i. 1.

³ 1 Kings viii. 27.

and in Nehemiah, the Levites, praying to God, say, "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host⁴:" where by "heaven" he means the sky or firmament; by "the heaven of heavens," that high and holy place where the blessed spirits behold the face of God; which as far excels the other heaven, as that doth the earth; and yet this, as well as the other, was made by the Lord; it was his wisdom that contrived, and it was his power that raised this stately and most glorious fabric out of nothing; he only spake the word, and immediately the foundation was laid, the superstructure erected, and the whole finished altogether; and therefore David saith, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth⁵."

But if God made this house, be sure it is well made, as well as it was possible for it to be, as to all the intents and purposes for which he made it. But he made it for a place of perfect joy, and bliss, and glory, to the holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, where they might live in perfect rest and happiness, the highest that their nature is capable of; and therefore we may be confident that there is no sort of true and real felicity, which pure and perfect spirits can possibly enjoy, but what is there to be had in its highest perfection imaginable; for they live in an house which God himself made on purpose to be an house of pleasure for them, which, therefore, may well be called "his house," as being made wholly and solely by himself.

And, besides, as it was God alone who made, it is he alone who upholds, maintains, and preserves this house continually in the very same state and condition wherein he at first made it, suffering no decay in any part of it, nor any thing to come near it that may so much as defile or annoy it, as we read in the Revelation, "There shall in no wise enter into it any

⁴ Neh. ix. 6.

⁵ Ps. xxxiii. 6.

thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie ⁶." Hence it is, that there is no sin or wickedness there; for that, by reason of its contrariety to the pure nature of God, is the greatest filth and annoyance in the world; and, therefore, God always keeps his house perfectly clear and free from all appearance of evil; insomuch that, so soon as ever some of the first inhabitants had sinned, he banished them immediately out of his house, lest it should be defiled, and so made unfit for his pure and holy creatures to dwell in: and ever since that time, there never was, nor ever will be, any, no, not the least sin imaginable committed there; though there be innumerable inhabitants, there is not the least spot, or blot, or blemish, in any one of them; there is no ignorance nor error, no pride or ambition, no envy, hatred, or malice, to be found; there is no such thing as schism and faction, no rebellion, no sedition, no riots, or tumults raised; there is no swearing, nor lying, nor stealing from one another, no striving or contending about *meum* or *tuum*, no brawling or scolding, nor so much as an impertinent or idle word to be heard from any of their mouths, nor vain thought to be seen in any of their hearts; but, as holiness becomes God's house for ever, all that live there are perfectly holy in all manner of conversation, so as never to offend God, either in thought, word, or action.

O blessed place! Who can but long to be there, where we shall be thus perfectly free from all manner of sin, and by consequence from all manner of suffering, too; where, as we shall never offend God, God will never afflict us any more! No, this house is kept so absolutely clean and sweet, that there is nothing in it that can in the least molest or annoy those that dwell there, but, so soon as ever any are admitted into it, "God wipes away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ⁷." So that all

⁶ Rev. xxi. 27.

⁷ Ib. ver. 4.

the inhabitants of that blessed place live in perpetual rest and felicity: they are never vexed or disturbed at any thing; for there is nothing that can possibly do it, every thing falling out just as they would have it: as they have no aches, or pains, or distempers, about them, so they are never crossed in their designs, never disappointed of their hopes, never interrupted in their business, never surprised by any accident, never lose any thing they have, nor want any thing they have not; by which means they are never discomposed, or out of tune; but always of the same temper, always quiet and at ease; neither feeling nor fearing any thing to disturb or trouble them, for they are fully assured that their condition shall never be altered, but they shall always live just as they do, in that the place they live in is kept and maintained by Almighty God himself, and, therefore, may be truly called "his house."

And so it may also, because it is of his furnishing: it is he alone who furnisheth this house with inhabitants, and with all things necessary and convenient for them. As for the inhabitants, he at first filled it with an innumerable company of immaterial or spiritual creatures, called angels, the greatest part whereof have continued there since the beginning of the world to this day, are there now, and will be so to all eternity; but some of them, not keeping their first estate, but leaving this their own habitation, "God hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day^s." And these being thus cast out of heaven, and roving about in these lower regions of the world, they found mankind made in the image of God, and so fitted to live in that holy habitation which they had left; which these apostate angels were so troubled at, that they set upon the first man Adam, in whom the rest were all contained, and so far prevailed upon him, that he, by their instigation, sinned against God; whereby both he himself and his whole posterity were so far tainted and polluted, that they became altogether unfit

to live in that holy place from which the others fell ; upon which God was pleased of his infinite mercy to set up another Adam, his only-begotten Son, who, by his dying in the nature of man, should expiate the sins of mankind, so that "whosoever repented and believed in him might be saved ;" by means whereof some men in all ages since the beginning of the world, at their departure out of this life, have been translated into this heavenly habitation, and so will many be to the end of the world, insomuch that it is very probable that there will be as many men saved, as there are angels damned ; and so this house of God will be as full of inhabitants at last, as it was at first : but they must ascribe it wholly to the goodness and mercy of God, that they ever came thither, and, therefore, must acknowledge it to be "his house," in that it is so wholly at his disposal, that none but he can ever admit one person into it.

And as it is he alone who furnisheth this house with inhabitants, so it is he alone who furnisheth it with all things necessary and convenient for them, with every thing they can possibly have occasion for, or can any way contribute towards their living as safely, as pleasantly, and as happily, there, as it is possible for creatures to live ; for they have all the accommodations they can think of, or desire. They can desire nothing, but they immediately have it ; or, rather, they always have whatsoever they can desire ; and so can never desire any thing which they have not : for, indeed, all things in the world are theirs, their proper goods and inheritance, as God himself assures us, saying, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things⁹." He, that is, every one that overcometh the world, the flesh, and the devil, so as to get to heaven, shall there "inherit all things ;" all things shall be actually conferred upon him, so that every one will enjoy all things in the world, as fully as if he was the sole possessor of them, or as if there was no person to enjoy any thing in the whole world, but only him-

⁹ Rev. xxi. 7.

self: all the true riches, all the real honours, all the solid and substantial pleasure, that any thing in the whole world can afford them, are continually possessed and enjoyed by all and every one that is in heaven; by which means they are as happy as it is possible for them to be, as happy as the whole creation, yea, as happy as the Creator himself, can make them. As they never fret, or vex, or grieve, or fear any thing, so they are always as full of love, and joy, and peace, and goodness, and all sorts of true felicity, as their souls can hold; always lively and vigorous, always cheerful and pleasant, always rejoicing and singing, and praising God, who of his infinite mercy hath brought them thither, and out of the inexhaustible treasure of his own goodness hath provided so plentifully for them in his own house; and it may well be called his house, seeing all things in it are of his providing, and belong wholly and solely to himself.

Especially considering that it is the place where he himself is pleased in a more especial manner to reside; there it is that he keeps his court; that is properly his throne, as he himself saith: "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool¹." And therefore David, addressing himself to God, saith, "Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens²." And our blessed Saviour all along in the Gospel calls him our Father which is in heaven, and commands us to direct our prayers to him as residing there, saying, "Our Father, which art in heaven;" not as if he was not every where else too, but because it is there that he is pleased in a more particular manner to manifest himself, to unveil his perfections, and to shine forth in all his glory; inso-much that this place hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for "the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof³." And, indeed, this is that which gives the greatest lustre, the highest perfection, to the happiness of those who live

¹ Isa. lxvi. 1.² Ps. cxxiii. 1.³ Rev. xxi. 23; xxii. 5.

there,—that they always see God face to face, behold his glory, and enjoy his presence, and have the light of his countenance shining continually upon them, and influencing them so, that their whole souls seem nothing else but flames of love and joy, arising from the full sight of God, and the clear apprehension of his special favour and goodness towards them, whereby they themselves also will be so enlightened as to “shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever⁴,” yea, our Saviour himself tells us, that “the righteous shall there shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father⁵.” But what do I mean to offer at any thing towards the description of that place “which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive it?” It is sufficient to our present purpose that God himself dwells there; and upon that account our blessed Saviour might truly call it, as he doth in my text, “his Father’s house.”

In which he saith, “There are many mansions;” which words are not to be so understood, as if there were several distinct rooms or apartments in heaven, where every one might live by himself as in his own proper cell; for, here they all live in common, and the whole house with all things in it is common to all and every one that is admitted into it; every one enjoying it as much as if there were none to enjoy it but himself, as I observed before.

But what, then, doth our Saviour mean by saying, “In my Father’s house are many mansions?”

His meaning, in short, is, that heaven is a very large, capacious place, able to receive and entertain a great many people. The apostles were very much grieved to hear that their Master was to leave them, although it was in order to his going to heaven, as not well knowing as yet whether they could follow him thither, or whether there was room enough for him and them too, as considering that he would have a

⁴ Dan. xii. 3.

⁵ Matt. xiii. 43.

vast train of holy angels about him, which might fill up the whole place; but our Lord bids them be of good cheer, assuring them that his Father's house, whither he was going, is a place of very great reception; "there are many mansions in it," abundance of room, enough for them and many more, even for all that should ever believe in him.

And, indeed, heaven must needs be a very large place that can hold such a multitude of inhabitants which are already in it. The holy angels, the ancient inhabitants of the place, which have lived there ever since it was first founded, are doubtless very many,—so many, that I question whether they themselves can tell how many they are. Daniel, in a short vision he had of the place, saw "thousands of thousands" there ministering unto God, "and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him⁶." And St. John, having had the like vision, saith, "I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands⁷;" that is, they were so many that they exceeded his arithmetic. And as for the children of men, whom Christ had purchased with his own blood to live with him in that holy place, the same St. John in another vision saw "an hundred forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel:" "And after this," saith he, "I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands⁸." From whence we may observe, by the way, that when our Saviour calls his flock "a little flock," and saith, that "there are but few that find the way to life," he is to be understood only comparatively, that his flock is but little in comparison of the multitude that follow after sin, the world, and the devil, and that there are but few who find the way to life, in comparison of the

⁶ Dan. vii. 10.

⁷ Rev. v. 11.

⁸ Ib. vii. 9.

many who miss of it, which, notwithstanding, considered absolutely, and in themselves, are certainly very many; as our Lord himself here intimates, by saying, that "In my Father's house are many mansions;" where there were great multitudes, not only of angels, but likewise of saints, residing in St. John's time; and many have been going to them ever since, and still are, and ever will be, to the end of the world.

And why may not you and I be in the number of them, as well as other people? If we be not, we must ever blame ourselves. Be sure there is room enough for us there, as well as for others; for Christ himself hath told us, "there are many mansions in his Father's house," on purpose to excite and encourage us to look after it; and if we do but set ourselves in good earnest about it, and apply ourselves to him for it, we cannot possibly fail of coming thither, for he himself hath assured us that he is gone before to prepare a place for us. "If it were not so," saith he, "I would have told you;" as if he had said, If there had not been room enough for you, as well as for me and others, in my Father's house, I would have acquainted you with it, that so your expectations might not be frustrated; for I would not impose upon you, nor flatter you with vain hopes of living with me in the other world, if there was no ground for you to expect it; but you have all the reason in the world to expect it, seeing that I myself assure you there "are many mansions in my Father's house," and that I am now going thither on purpose to prepare a place for you.

From whence we may observe, by the way, how careful our blessed Saviour was to conceal nothing from us that might any way conduce either to our salvation or comfort. "If it were not so," saith he, "I would have told you;" and so he certainly would have told us many other things, which he hath not, if it had been necessary for us to have known them; and, therefore, we may conclude, that whatsoever he hath not told us, it is no matter whether we know it or no. There are a great many nice questions raised in

divinity, especially by the schoolmen, which have perplexed the minds of the greatest scholars, and have caused great heats and animosities in the Church, but they are generally of such things, which our blessed Master never thought good to determine, nor to tell us any thing of them; which he would not have failed to have done, if either our future happiness, or our present comfort, were any way concerned in the knowledge of them; which I therefore observe unto you, that so you may not trouble your heads with any impertinent controversies about our holy religion, which serve only to amuse and distract men's minds, and to divert them from what is substantial and necessary. What Christ hath taught you, either with his own mouth or by his apostles, that you must believe and act accordingly, if you expect to be saved by him; but as for other things, let others dispute about them if they please, but do you rest satisfied in your own minds that, if it had been necessary for you to have known them, Christ would have told you of them, as he assures his apostles, saying, "If it were not so, I would have told you."

And then he adds, "I go to prepare a place for you;" he doth not say, I go to make room for you, as if there was not room enough made already, but, "I go to prepare a place for you," to take care that you, as well as other persons, may have room there; and he repeats it again in the same words, saying immediately, "and if I go and prepare a place for you:" to shew that this is a thing which he would have us take special notice of, and to carry it always in our minds,—that it is by him only that we can get to heaven; that it is he, and he alone, that prepares a place for us in his Father's house; and therefore it must needs behove us very much rightly to understand his full intent and meaning in these words.

For which purpose, therefore, we must consider, first, that our blessed Saviour having done and suffered all that was necessary for our redemption and salvation upon earth, he was then taken up to heaven, where he

hath been ever since, and ever will be, sitting at the right hand of God; that is, he is exalted above all the creatures in the world, and vested with absolute power and dominion over them, as St. Peter informs us, saying, that Christ "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him⁹." And to the same purpose St. Paul saith, that "God, having raised Christ from the dead, hath set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come¹." And elsewhere, that "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord²." The meaning of all which is, that Christ Jesus was no sooner got to heaven, but he was immediately advanced above all the creatures in the world, that the very angels and archangels themselves were obliged to own him for their Lord, and to do him homage; that all power is committed unto him both in heaven and earth, so that he can do whatsoever he pleaseth in the whole world; that no creature can resist his will, nor oppose his authority when he sees good to exercise it; that all places are at his disposal both in the Church triumphant in heaven, and in that which is militant here on earth; that he reigns above as King of kings, and Lord of lords, yea, as the Ruler and Governor of the whole creation; that not only angels and men, but the very devils themselves, are subject to him, and can do nothing without his command or leave; that he can pardon or condemn, he can save or destroy, he can take in or shut out of heaven, whom he pleaseth; in short, that he is an absolute Monarch over the whole world, so that we, and all things in it, are wholly at

⁹ 1 Pet. iii. 22.¹ Eph. i. 20, 21.² Phil. ii. 9—11.

his command; he may do with us what he will, there is no withstanding of him, no appeal from him, for he is the supreme Judge both of quick and dead, both of men and angels; they are all equally subject to him, and shall be all equally judged by him; for, as he himself saith, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father³."

But what is all this to us? Are we concerned any more than other creatures in Christ's exaltation at the right hand of God? Yes, certainly, very much; for he having taken our nature upon him, whatsoever he did, or was done to him, in that, was wholly for us, and upon our account; he was born for us, as the prophet saith, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given⁴." "He suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps⁵." "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:—he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed⁶." "He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him⁷." "He is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption⁸." And as "he was delivered for our offences," he "was raised again for our justification⁹." And so, when he went to heaven, he went thither on purpose to appear in the presence of God for us¹⁰; and, therefore, St. Paul, having said that "Christ is exalted far above all principality and power," presently adds, "that God put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body¹¹." Where we may observe, that, as Christ is made head, or governor, over all things, he is made so to the Church for the sake of his Church, that he may order and dispose of all things for the good of it, and of all

³ John v. 22, 23.

⁴ Isa. ix. 6.

⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 21.

⁶ Isa. liii. 4, 5.

⁷ 2 Cor. v. 21.

⁸ 1 Cor. i. 30.

⁹ Rom. iv. 25.

¹⁰ Heb. ix. 24.

¹¹ Eph. i. 22, 23.

the sound members in it; which plainly shews, that Christ's advancement to so high a degree of glory and power in heaven is of mighty advantage to us upon earth.

But you will say, perhaps, What doth he there do for us? What? More, doubtless, than we are able to understand; but, that we may understand it as fully as we are able in this life, he is represented as being our advocate with the Father; so St. John calls him, saying, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world¹." An advocate, we know, is one that pleads in the behalf of a person accused, shewing cause why he ought not to be condemned. Now, saith the apostle, "If any man sin," that is, if any man hath committed such a sin for which he fears he shall be condemned, let such a one remember that we have an advocate with the Father, no less a person than his own Son, Jesus Christ the righteous, who, being himself the propitiation for our sins, may well plead that we ought not to be condemned for them, seeing he himself hath borne all the punishment that was due unto them, and so can easily bring us off, and obtain a full discharge and pardon for us.

As it was typified also in the old Law; for the high priest once every year, even upon the Day of Expiation, having killed the goat of the sin-offering, brought some of the blood of it into the holy of holies, and there, sprinkling it upon and before the mercy-seat, made thereby an atonement for the whole congregation, and then laid his hands upon the head of the scape-goat, confessing over him all the sins of the people, and so, putting them upon the head of the goat, sent him away into the wilderness never to be heard of more; so Christ, our high priest, having offered up himself as a sacrifice for our sins, he entered

¹ 1 John ii. 1, 2.

into the holy of all holies, into heaven itself, and there, by virtue of that blood which he shed, makes such an effectual atonement for all our sins, that they are presently carried away, nobody knows whither, so as never to be heard of any more, than as if they had never been committed².

And hence it is that he is called “a Mediator between God and man³,” one who makes up all differences betwixt us, reconciling God to us, and us to God; and for the same reason he is said also to make intercession for us, to intercede with his Father that he would not be angry with us, nor punish us for our sins, but that he would accept of his sufferings for us, as a full recompence and satisfaction for all the wrongs and injuries that we have done him; which he doth so effectually, that St. Paul challengeth the whole world to shew any reason why they who believe in Christ, and obey his Gospel, should be condemned, saying, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us⁴.” “Who also maketh intercession for us;” there lies the whole stress of the business, that our blessed Saviour, who suffered for our sins upon earth, is now making intercession for us in heaven; for it is by this means that he applies the merits of his death unto us, both for the pardon of our sins, and for the enduing us with grace and power to forsake them, together with all the other blessings which he hath purchased for us. He intercedes with his Father on our behalf, and prays him to bestow them upon us.

And Christ, be sure, never prays in vain, but whatsoever he asketh of the Father is always granted. When he was upon earth he could say to his Father, “I know that thou hearest me always⁵.” How much

² Lev. xvi. Heb. vii.

⁴ Rom. viii. 33, 34.

³ 1 Tim. ii. 5.

⁵ John xi. 42.

more, if it were possible, now he is in heaven, and hath actually merited all the good things that he can ever desire for us! There, certainly, whatsoever he desires, he immediately hath it; as we see in that remarkable promise he made to his disciples, "I will pray the Father," saith he, "and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth⁶." This was the greatest thing that he could ever pray for; and yet he was no sooner got to heaven, but the Spirit of God was given to them in a miraculous manner; by which we see, both that he had prayed according to his promise, and that his prayer was heard. And so it always is, by which means he can do what he will for us, for it is but his willing it to be done, and immediately it is so; and this, indeed, is the proper notion of Christ's mediation, or intercession, for us; for we must not think that he makes any solemn prayers to his Father, as we do, or at least ought to do; no, whatsoever he would have, he only actually wills it should be so, and presently it is just so as he would have it; which is the greatest comfort in the world to all that believe in him, and the greatest encouragement for us all to do so; for as we have no ground to mistrust his good will towards us, who so loved us as to give himself for us, we have as little to mistrust his power, who can do what he will for us, but may well conclude with the apostle, "that he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them⁷."

From hence, therefore, we may easily understand how truly our Lord here saith, "I go to prepare a place for you;" for, seeing that when he went from hence he was carried directly into heaven; seeing when he came thither he had all power immediately conferred upon him; and seeing he there exerciseth that power continually for us, in order to his bringing us at last to himself in heaven; he may be properly said to pre-

⁶ John xiv. 16.

⁷ Heb. vii. 25.

pare a place for us there, and to go thither for that purpose, that being the great end of his ascension into heaven, and of his exaltation there,—even that he might from thence supply us with whatsoever is necessary to our following him thither, that we may be actually possessed of that happiness which he hath bought for us with the price of his own blood; to which it being absolutely necessary that we repent of our sins, and so have them pardoned, therefore it is said, that “God hath exalted Christ with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins⁸.” Under which is comprehended whatsoever is required, or can any way contribute, to our being saved by him.

For which purpose, therefore, Christ being now, in his human nature, at the right hand of God in heaven, and in his divine nature always present with us upon earth too, he often puts us in mind of the evil of sin in itself, and of the dismal effects it will have upon us, if we continue in it. He stirs up our hatred of it, strengthens our resolutions against it, and assists our endeavours to forsake and avoid it. He, by the sweet influences of his Holy Spirit, inflames our minds with the love of God, and with sincere desires to serve and please him; he prevents our falling into temptations, or gives us power to withstand and overcome them; he sanctifies all occurrences to us, so as to make them work together for our good; he gives us opportunities of exercising our faith, and fear, and trust on God; our patience, humility, meekness, self-denial, and all other virtues, and assists us in the exercise of them; he affords us the means of grace, and co-operates with them, that so they may be effectual to us: when we read or hear the word of God, he opens our eyes to see, and our hearts to receive the truth in the love of it; when we are at our devotions, he assists us in the performance of them, and perfumes them with the incense of his own merits, that God may be well pleased with

⁸ Acts v. 31.

them; when we are at the holy Sacrament, he stands by us, and feeds us with the spiritual food of his own most blessed body and blood; when we are in straits, and know not which way to take, he directs us to that which shall be most for our advantage; when any trouble falls upon us, he either takes it off, or else gives us strength to bear, and grace to make a good use of it; when, by any surprise, or indisposition of body, our minds are disordered and out of tune, he composeth and brings them into a right frame again; when we are about any good work, he is at both ends of it, and in the middle too, assisting us in the doing of it, and interceding with his Father to accept of it when it is done. In short, he leads and directs us through the whole course of our lives, till he hath "made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," and then he brings us to it, and gives us the full possession of it. And he who went thither on purpose that he might thus prepare us for heaven, as well as heaven for us, might well say, "I go to prepare a place for you."

And then he adds, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself." But what? Will he not receive us before that? Yes, certainly; he will receive our souls, so soon as ever they depart out of our bodies; as we may gather from what he himself said to the thief upon the cross, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise⁹." For from hence it is evident, that although the penitent's body was to be laid in the earth, yet his soul was to be carried the very same day he died directly to Christ, in paradise, or heaven, where he then was as God, although his manhood ascended not till some days after. The same appears from St. Paul's "desire to depart, and be with Christ¹." Which plainly shews that he firmly believed that he should be with Christ so soon as ever he departed out of this life. But the clearest demonstration of this great truth, and that

⁹ Luke xxiii. 43.

¹ Phil. i. 23.

which puts it beyond all doubt, is taken from St. Stephen, who, being just at the point of death, committed his soul into the hands of Christ, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit²." Which questionless he would not have done, had he not been fully assured by the Holy Ghost, that Christ would, according to his desire, receive his spirit unto himself, at the same moment that it left his body; and so doubtless every soul that ever departed out of this life in the true faith of Christ is now with him in heaven, his holy angels carrying it, as they did Lazarus, directly thither.

But what, then, doth our Lord mean by his coming again, and receiving us to himself then? His meaning, in short, is, that although he was now to leave this world, and go up to heaven, there to continue many years, preparing a place for us; yet at the last day, when the whole number of his elect shall be accomplished, he will come hither again, and then he will receive us altogether, both soul and body, and so our whole man, unto himself; that so the same persons who believed in him, and served him upon earth, may live with him for evermore in heaven; as he himself hath promised in the following words, saying, "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

This he knew would revive and rejoice his disciples' hearts exceedingly,—that they should live with him in the other world; and therefore he is often pleased to put them in mind of it: "If any man serve me," saith he, "let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be³." And elsewhere he saith, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne⁴." And that we may be sure to do so, he prays to the Father for it, saying, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my

² Acts vii. 59.

³ John xii. 26.

⁴ Rev. iii. 21.

glory⁵.” Where we may take notice also how he prays, or intercedes, for us,—even by signifying his will to have it so, as I observed before, “Father, I will,” saith he, “that they also whom thou hast given me be with me.” And what could we ourselves have desired more, nay, what could Christ himself have desired more for us than this,—that we may live with him? For if we live with him, we shall live with the best Friend that we have in the whole world, and whom we love above all things in it; with him who loved us, too, and gave himself for us; with him who took all our sins upon himself, who bore all the shame and pain that was due unto us for them; with him who was derided, scoffed at, buffeted, scourged, crowned with crowns, arraigned, condemned, crucified; and all for us; with him who washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and the Father; with him who saves us from our enemies, and delivers us out of the hand of all that hate us; with him who gives us all things necessary both for life and godliness, and enables us to make a right use of them; with him who is now interceding and preparing a place for us on purpose that we may live with him in heaven; in heaven, where he will fashion our vile bodies that they may be like his glorious body, and make our souls perfect like his own, that so we may be fit to keep him company; where he will always smile upon us, and manifest his special love and kindness to us; where he will shine forth in all his glory before us, and keep our eyes always open to behold it; where he will advance us to the highest degrees of honour that we are capable of, and fill us as full of all true joy and comfort as our souls can hold; in a word, where we shall live with him, our dearest Lord and ever blessed Saviour, not only for some time, but for ever and ever, as his apostle hath taught us, saying, that “we who shall be alive and remain” at

⁵ John xvii. 24.

the last day, "shall meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord⁶;" and then adds, "Wherefore comfort ye one another with these words."

And well may he add, that,—for this certainly is the greatest comfort that a true Christian can ever have, insomuch that it hath prevented me in that which I promised to shew in the last place,—even that the consideration of these things should keep our hearts from being troubled at any thing we meet with here below: for if we firmly believe, and duly consider, these words of our blessed Saviour, and what we have now heard upon them, how can we suffer either our heads or our hearts to be troubled about any thing upon earth, but only how to get to heaven? What if we should be deprived of all our temporal enjoyments, what need we be troubled when we have mansions above ready furnished to our hands with all the good things we can desire? What if it be difficult to get a place there? We have an almighty Harbinger gone before to prepare one for us. What if we have never so many enemies, yea, what if all the men upon earth, and all the devils in hell, should conspire to ruin us? What need we be troubled at that, when we have a sure Friend in heaven, who can abate their pride, assuage their malice, confound their devices, and make them against their wills do us good by all they design against us? What if we have nobody here below that minds or matters what becomes of us? What need we be troubled at that, when we have an infinitely wise, and powerful, and good, and merciful Saviour above, continually taking care of us, and providing all things necessary for us, and one who can aid and assist us in all conditions, upon all occasions, whatsoever? If we be in want, he can supply us; if in danger, he can deliver us; if in pain, he can ease us; if in disgrace, he can bring us to honour; if we be accused, he can acquit us; if sorrowful, he can comfort us; if weak, he can strengthen us; if sick, he can heal us; if

⁶ 1 Thess. iv. 17.

dying, he can receive us to himself? Can, did I say? Yea, and will, too, if we do but obey and trust in him as we ought.

Let us not, therefore, trouble our heads any more about any thing, but how to serve our great Lord and Master Christ, by doing all such good works as he hath set us, and putting our whole trust and confidence only on him, both for God's assistance of us in the doing them, and for his acceptance of them when they are done. Let us but constantly do this, and then we may be sure that he will guide, assist, and bless us through the whole course of our lives, and at length bring us to that blessed place which he hath prepared for us in his Father's house, that we may always live with him, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, world without end.

SERMON XX.

FAITH IN CHRIST, THE ONLY MEANS OF OVERCOMING
THE WORLD.

1 JOHN v. 5.

“ Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that
Jesus is the Son of God ? ”

UNBELIEF is not only a great sin of itself, but one great cause of all other sins : it may be truly called the mother of sin, as the devil is the father ; for it was that which, by his instigation, brought forth sin at first into the world, and it is that which still maintains and keeps it. When the old serpent assaulted our first parents, the first attack he made was upon their FAITH ; and when that was once shaken, he soon brought them down. God had said to Adam, and in him to the woman, which was not as yet taken out of him, “ Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat : but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it : for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die¹. ” But when the serpent came to the woman, the first thing he did was to call God’s word into question ; “ Yea,” saith he, “ hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden² ? ” and so tempted her to doubt whether God had ever said so or no ; or whether he really meant as he said. And the woman began pre-

¹ Gen. ii. 16, 17.

² Gen. iii. 1.

sently to make some doubt of it, as appears from her answer to the question; for she said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die³." In which answer she did not keep close, as she should have done, to God's words, but deviated from them in several respects. God had not said, "Ye shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden," which was the tree of life⁴; but, "Ye shall not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Neither had God said, "Ye shall not touch it;" but only, "Ye shall not eat of it." Neither had he said, "Lest ye die;" but, "Ye shall surely die:" whereas that expression, "Lest ye die," implies as if it was a question whether they should or no: so that she plainly began to doubt of the truth of what God had said. This the serpent takes hold of; and perceiving her faith began to fail, to strike it quite dead, he said in plain terms, "Ye shall not surely die;" just contrary to what God had said; and he gives a reason for it too; for, saith he, "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil⁵," where he again contradicts the word of God, and yet hath the impudence to appeal to God himself for the proof of what he said. God had said, "They should die in the day they ate of that fruit;" and the serpent saith, "That in the day they ate of it their eyes should be opened:" yet, nevertheless, upon the serpent's peremptory asserting it, the woman believed him rather than God, and therefore, "when she saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her; and he did eat⁶," which certainly neither of them would have done if they had firmly believed the word of God, when

³ Gen. iii. 2, 3.

⁵ Gen. iii. 5.

⁴ Gen. ii. 9.

⁶ Ver. 6.

he said, "That in the day they ate thereof they should surely die." From whence it appears, that unbelief was the first sin that man fell into, and that which made way for all the other sins that mankind hath since committed: for all men being then contained in the first, he thus falling by his unbelief, all fell with him into that state of sin wherein they now lie, prone to all manner of vice and wickedness.

This, I confess, at first sight may seem very remote to the words I have chosen for my text: but we shall see presently, that it will give us much light into them. For which purpose we must further observe, that, although all men are condemned for the unbelief of their first parents, yet our most merciful Creator hath so ordered it, that none suffer but for their own personal unbelief; the sentence being never executed but only upon those who are guilty of it themselves in their own proper persons, as well as in their common head. For the same day on which the first Adam fell by his not believing the word of God, God was pleased to raise up another Adam, his only-begotten Son, his own eternal Word, "That whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have eternal life⁷." So that as unbelief was the occasion of our fall and destruction in the first Adam, faith is now made the condition of our rise and salvation by the second: and, therefore, no man can now perish but by reason of his own unbelief; because he will not believe in the Son of God, nor in what God hath said concerning him: for if he doth that, he hath God's word for it, that he shall not perish; as Adam had it, that he should die if he ate of the forbidden fruit. There is only this difference between them,—that God spake to Adam by way of threatening, he speaks to us by way of promise: but both are equally the word of God; and we have the same ground to believe what he had promised to us in Christ, as Adam had to believe what he had threatened to him; or rather, if possible, more: forasmuch as the threatening

⁷ John iii. 16.

was only by the word spoken, the promise is by the Word incarnate; "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"⁸ in our own nature united to his divine Person. And if we do but rightly believe in this Word, we shall as certainly be saved by him, as we were condemned by our unbelief, in the first man.

This the devil knows well enough; and so he did from the beginning: and, therefore, as he overcame our first parents by tempting them not to believe God's word, so he hath endeavoured ever since, and still doth, either to destroy or corrupt men's faith in Christ. If he can but do that, he cares for no more; for then he is sure of them. For this purpose, therefore, he doth all he can to keep men off from believing any thing at all concerning Christ; and if he cannot do that, then he strives to make them believe wrong,—otherwise than God hath said. But his main drift and design is to tempt men to deny, or doubt of, Christ's Divinity, as the main foundation upon which our faith is grounded. And if he can once prevail upon men to do that, he need not trouble himself to tempt them to any notorious vice; for how well soever they may seem to live, as to outward appearance, they can never truly mortify any one sin, nor do any one act that will be acceptable unto God: for whatsoever they may pretend, they can never overcome the world, no more than their first parents did, by reason of their unbelief. This we may be sure of, for we have God's own word for it, saying by his apostle, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Which is the same as if he had positively said, No man whatsoever can overcome the world, but only he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.

But that ye may more fully understand both the sense and certainty of this divine proposition, we must first explain the terms in each part of it, and then confirm the truth of the whole. The proposition consisteth of two parts, and, accordingly, the terms to be

⁸ John i. 14.

explained are only these two in general; first, what it is to overcome the world: and then, what it is to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. When these terms are explained, it will be easy to put them together, and to shew the necessary connexion between them, and so the truth and certainty of the whole proposition.

To know what it is to overcome the world, we must first consider what that world is which we are to overcome. But we need not go far to find out that it is a term which this apostle often useth, especially in this epistle: and, therefore, lest we should be mistaken in it, he himself is pleased to tell us, in effect, what he means by it; where he saith, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him⁹." For here he plainly opposeth "the world" to "God," and makes use of that word to signify that which is repugnant or contrary to the divine will and nature: for he makes the love of God, and of the world, to be inconsistent; so that no man can love them both together. He who loves God, cannot love the world; but he that loves the world, cannot love God. And, therefore, by "the world," the apostle here means the same that his Master did by the word "mammon," where he saith, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon¹." But that we may be sure to understand the full meaning and extent of the word, the apostle in the following words tells us what the world, in his sense of the word, consists of: "For," saith he, "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world²." Where he again asserts the world to be contrary to God, and reduceth all that is so in it to three heads; sensual pleasures, earthly riches, and pride, or vain-glory: so that these

⁹ 1 John ii. 15.

¹ Matt. vi. 24.

² 1 John ii. 16.

three things make up the whole world, in the sense wherein he useth the word.

Now by this, we may easily discover what he means by overcoming the world: for he can mean nothing else but the suppressing all inordinate desires of the pleasures, riches, and honours of this world; and so every thing that hinders us from doing our duty to God, and keeping his commandments: as appears, also, from the context itself. In the next verse but one before my text the apostle saith, that to the regenerate, of whom he speaks, "God's commandments are not grievous:" and in the next verse he gives the reason of it; "For," saith he, "whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world:" which would be no reason at all, unless, by overcoming the world, he meant subduing our affections to the things of this world, which are repugnant to, and oppose themselves against, God's commandments, and so make them grievous to us, because they cross our corrupt inclinations. Whereas, they who are regenerate, having their minds taken off from the things of this world, are thereby freed from those obstacles which made the keeping of God's commandments difficult and grievous to them, and so observe them with ease and pleasure. And, therefore, by overcoming the world in my text, he must needs mean the same thing,—even such a subduing and suppressing our love and desire of the pleasures, riches, and honours of this world, that we can with ease "walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." So that no man can be truly said to have overcome the world, until he hath got so much above it, as to make it his constant care to avoid all manner of evil, and to do all the good he can. This is that which the apostle here saith no man can do but he who "believes that Jesus is the Son of God:" the meaning of which words comes next to be considered.

There be several persons who in the Holy Scriptures are said to be "the sons of God," even all that are regenerate, and born again of water and the Holy Ghost: but these are made the sons of God, because Jesus,

their head, to whom they are united, is so ; yea, it is he who makes them so : for, “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name³.” And he who can give power to others to become the sons of God, must needs be so himself in a more eminent and peculiar manner : He is not only his Son, as others are, but his only-begotten Son, as none is ever called but himself ; but he is frequently called so, both by others, and by himself too, who best knew how he was the Son of God : “God so loved the world,” saith he, “that he gave his only-begotten Son,” meaning himself⁴, and so elsewhere. From whence it is manifest, that he is the Son of God, not by adoption, nor by regeneration, but by real generation ; for he was begotten of God the Father, and, therefore, is his Son in the highest and most proper sense that can be ; so as to be in all respects of the self-same nature with the Father, according to the common notion of generation.

And that we might not be altogether ignorant of the way how he was begotten of the Father, he himself acquaints us with as much of it as is necessary, or, indeed, possible, for us to know, where he saith, “as the Father hath life in himself ; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself⁵.” To have life in himself is proper and peculiar only to God ; all things else that live, besides him, living not in themselves, but in him : “for in him we live,” saith the apostle⁶. But this essential property of God, and so the divine essence itself, the Father gave or communicated to the Son ; and that, too, in the same manner as it is in himself, without any difference or distinction at all, but only that the one gave it, and, therefore, is properly the Father begetting ; the other received it, and, therefore, is properly the Son begotten of him. And hence it is, that although they be both the same God, as having the same divine essence each in himself ; yet

³ John i. 12.

⁵ Ib. v. 26.

⁴ Ib. iii. 16.

⁶ Acts xvii. 28.

the Son is so the same God, that, according to what the Council of Nice declared out of the Holy Scriptures, he is ‘God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made;’ but still ‘of one substance with the Father;’ as he himself also declared, saying, “I and my Father are one⁷,” *Ἔσμεν*, ‘we are,’ in the plural number, and therefore distinct substances; but, we are one, in the singular number: not *εἷς*, one Person, but *ἐν ἑσμέν*, we are one Being, one Essence, one Substance, one Jehovah, one God. And so they, who heard him speak these words, plainly understood him, for they took up stones to cast at him; and the reason they gave him for it was because, as they said to him, “Thou, being a man, makest thyself God⁸.” In like manner, upon another occasion, when Jesus had called God his Father, the Jews sought to kill him, because he said “that God was his Father, making himself equal with God⁹,” which shews that, when he called himself “the Son of God,” or said, “God was his Father,” they apprehended his meaning to be, that he himself was God, equal to the Father: and so plainly it was, as the Catholic Church likewise hath all along believed.

In this sense, therefore, we ought to believe Jesus to be the Son of God; because this is the sense wherein the Holy Scriptures declare him to be so: and he that believes it in any other sense, his faith is groundless and null, as having no foundation in God’s word; so that he cannot properly be said to believe it at all. And, verily, it is our unspeakable comfort and happiness, that this great fundamental article of our whole religion,—even that Jesus Christ is so the Son of God, as to be himself truly God, of the same nature, substance, and glory with the Father,—is so clearly, so fully, so frequently, revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures, that none, unless they wilfully shut their eyes, but may easily see it; and none can deny or doubt of it, but only such as the devil hath got the same power

⁷ John x. 30.⁸ Ver. 33.⁹ Ib. v. 18.

over which he had over our first parents,—to make them deny or doubt of what God himself hath said.

But I hope none here present do so; and, therefore, I need not insist any longer upon it; especially considering that it hath been so fully proved by many learned men, beyond all contradiction. Howsoever, that I may contribute something towards the confirming your faith in it, I shall only observe two or three things, not usually taken notice of, in our Saviour's life and actions while he was upon earth, which plainly demonstrate him to be the true God.

First, therefore, when Satan would have had Jesus fall down and worship him, "Jesus saith unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve¹." Which shews that he judged it to be utterly unlawful to worship any but the true God, and detested the very mention of it; and yet he himself had such worship often performed to him. A leper worshipped him². A certain ruler worshipped him³. The woman of Canaan worshipped him⁴. The man that was born blind worshipped him⁵. His own disciples worshipped him⁶. The women that came to his sepulchre after he was risen worshipped him⁷. His apostles also worshipped him after his resurrection⁸; and again at his ascension⁹. All these, and doubtless many others, worshipped him; and yet he never rebuked them for it; as he would certainly have done, if he had not been the true God, to whom alone such worship was due, according to his own words. All acknowledge him to be a good man; but no good man, nor any good creature whatsoever, would have suffered himself to be thus worshipped as a God, without reproving those who did it. When Cornelius fell down to worship Peter, "he took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man¹⁰." When the priest of Jupiter, with the men of

¹ Matt. iv. 10.

² Ib. viii. 2.

³ Ib. ix. 18.

⁴ Ib. xv. 25.

⁵ John ix. 38.

⁶ Matt. xiv. 33.

⁷ Ib. xxviii. 9.

⁸ Ib. xxviii. 17.

⁹ Luke xxiv. 52.

¹⁰ Acts x. 25.

Lystra, would have done sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, the apostles “rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you¹¹.” When St. John would have worshipped the angel, the angel said to him, “See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant: worship God¹².” And so again, Rev. xxii. 9. But we find nothing of this in Christ. When people worshipped him, he never forbade them, nor reprovèd them for it; but accepted of it, and shewed himself to be well pleased with it, by working miracles for them that did it: which he, be sure, would never have done, if he had not been the true God, whom all the creatures in the world are bound to worship. But it is no wonder that he accepted of divine worship from men, when it is the divine command, that “all the angels worship him¹.” “That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father².” And, “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father³.”

Again I observe, that Christ, in his revelation of the divine will, always speaks as from himself in his own name. He never saith, as the prophets are wont to do, “The Lord hath spoken;” or, “Thus saith the Lord:” but, “Thus I say, I say unto you, Swear not at all. I say unto you, Love your enemies. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:” and so all along he speaks with authority, with divine authority; not as the scribes, nor as the prophets, nor as any other creature must have done, that would not usurp upon God’s prerogative. Neither doth he call upon men, as the prophets do, “To turn unto the Lord,” but bids them come to him: “Come unto me all ye that labour, take my yoke upon you, learn of me⁴.” “Ye

¹¹ Acts xiv. 14, 15.¹² Rev. xix. 10.¹ Heb. i. 6.² John v. 23.³ Phil. ii. 10, 11.⁴ Matt. xi. 28, 29.

believe in God, believe also in me ⁵.” “Abide in me, and I in you ⁶.” “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” Well might the officers, which were sent to apprehend him, say, “Never man spake like this man ⁷.” For this could not be the language of man, but God, especially seeing he makes his promises, as well as laws, in his own name, and such promises which none but God can ever perform, and, therefore, would never make: as, “I will give you rest ⁸.” “I will send the Comforter ⁹.” “I will raise him up at the last day ¹⁰.” “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me ¹¹.” “Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it ¹².” Many such expressions came from him, which discovered him to be God, as plainly as those places do it, where he is expressly called so.

But that which I look upon as most observable of all is, that he did not only speak, but act, in his own name, and by his own power. He saith, I confess, in one place, “I am come in my Father’s name ¹³.” And in another, “The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me ¹⁴.” But we must observe, that he doth not say, “In the name of God,” but “of his Father.” If he had said, “In the name of God,” some might have been apt to think, though without ground, that he himself was not God; for, if he was, it would have been more proper to have said, he came or acted in his own name. But, to prevent that mistake, he saith only “in the name of the Father,” and so he acted even as God in the name of the Father, because he received his divine essence, and so the power by which he acted, from the Father. In which sense he saith, “I can of myself do nothing ¹.” And, “I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things ².” And, “If I do

⁵ John xiv. 1.

⁸ Matt. xi. 28.

¹¹ Ib. xii. 32.

¹⁴ Ib. x. 25.

⁶ Ib. xv. 4.

⁹ John xvi. 7.

¹² Matt. xvi. 18.

¹ Ib. v. 30.

⁷ Ib. vii. 46.

¹⁰ Ib. vi. 39. 44.

¹³ John v. 43.

² Ib. viii. 28.

not the works of my Father, believe me not³." And so all along he speaks of the Father, as the Person from whom he received his power, as being his Son; but still he acted by that power immediately from himself, as being God.

To prove this, we need go no farther than the works of creation, wherein God did most clearly exert and shew forth his power and Godhead, in producing all things out of nothing by a word of his mouth: he only said, "Let there be light: and there was light⁴." "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together in one place: and it was so⁵." "Let the earth bring forth grass: and it was so⁶." Thus the whole creation was finished, only by God's expressing and signifying his will, that every thing should be as he pleased, and so it was; which was such an act of divine power, that no creature could ever pretend to it, nor, indeed, can be capable of it, it being an incommunicable perfection of the Divine nature to act so immediately in, and of itself, and perfectly according to its own will.

And yet this was the way that Christ acted when he was upon earth, and so demonstrated his divine power and glory the same way as God had done it in making of the world. For when there came a leper to him, saying, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," Jesus only said, "I will; be thou clean," and it was so; "immediately his leprosy was cleansed⁷." When at several times he saw Peter, and Andrew, and James, and John, and Levi the son of Alphaeus, he said, "Follow me," and it was so; "they left all, and followed him⁸." When there arose a great storm, and the waves of the sea beat into the ship where he was, he only said, "Peace, be still," and it was so; "the wind ceased, and there was a great calm⁹." When he came to Jairus' house, and found his daughter

³ John x. 37.⁴ Gen. i. 3.⁵ Ver. 9.⁶ Ver. 11.⁷ Matt. viii. 2, 3.⁸ Matt. iv. 18, 21. Mark ii. 14.⁹ Mark iv. 38.

lying dead, he only said, "Talitha cumi," (Damsel, arise,) and it was so; "straightway the damsel arose, and walked¹⁰." When they brought to him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, he only said, "Ephphatha, Be opened," and it was so; for "straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain¹¹." When he saw a fig-tree with leaves, and no fruit upon it, he only said, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever," and it was so; for "presently the fig-tree withered away¹²." When he came near the city Nain, and saw a dead man carried out to be buried, he only said, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise," and it was so; for, "he that was dead sat up, and began to speak¹." When Lazarus had been dead four days, and was laid in his grave, he only said, "Lazarus, come forth," and it was so; "he that was dead came forth²." There are many such instances to be found in the Gospel, of Christ's acting merely by his word. And which, if it be possible, is more remarkable, he did the same by his apostles, who wrought miracles only in his name: as when Peter saw a lame man, he said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk³," and he did so. At Lystra he said to the cripple, as it is in the old Greek manuscripts, "In the name of Jesus Christ, stand upright on thy feet⁴," and so he did. Ananias said unto Saul, "The Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight⁵," which gives light to Acts xxii. 13. Thus Peter said to Æneas, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed⁶," and he did so. St. Paul said to the damsel possessed with an evil spirit, "I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her⁷," and so he did. This was their constant way of working miracles, insomuch that the

¹⁰ Mark v. 41.¹ Luke vii. 14.⁴ Ib. xiv. 10.¹¹ Mark vii. 34, 35.² John xi. 43.⁵ Ib. ix. 17.⁷ Ib. xvi. 18.¹² Matt. xxi. 19.³ Acts iii. 6, 7.⁶ Ib. ver. 34.

Jewish exorcists taking notice of it, they also called over them that had familiar spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth^s." In all which it is to be observed, that Christ had no sooner spoke the word with his own mouth, or by his apostles, but the thing was done: which plainly shews, that he could do what he would, only by willing it should be done. Which, as it is the proper notion of Omnipotence, so it is an undeniable argument and demonstration of his Godhead. From all which it appears, that God himself, in the Holy Scriptures, hath declared both by his words and works, that Jesus Christ is his own natural or essential Son, of the same nature and substance with himself; and, therefore, whosoever would believe aright, according to his own word, must thus believe, that "Jesus is the Son of God."

The terms being thus explained—what it is to overcome the world, and how we are to believe that Jesus is the Son of God; we are now to consider what dependence one of them hath upon the other, and so the truth of this whole proposition, that no man can overcome the world, but he who believeth Jesus to be the Son of God. But for this we need not go from the text itself, which, being God's own word, cannot but be true; and we shall have all the reason in the world to believe it, whether we understand the reason of it, how it comes to be so, or no. For it is not the reason of the thing, but the testimony of God, that is the true ground of our faith; and how many reasons soever may be given for it, they add no more to the ground of our believing it, than they do to the truth itself. What God saith is true, whether we know the reason of it or no; and if we can give ten thousand reasons for it, we are still to believe it, only because God saith it: for otherwise it is not faith, but science; and, therefore, all reason hath to do in this case is, only to search into the grounds we have to believe

^s Acts xix. 13.

that God said it: which being once supposed, or proved, we must believe the thing itself only upon God's word. And we have all the reason in the world to do so, because he cannot lie; and, therefore, what he saith cannot but be true. And we are bound by our reason itself to believe it, although it be above our reason, so that we cannot understand or comprehend it.

Indeed, in this our corrupt and imperfect state, our understandings are so weak and dark, that we can scarce see into the reason of the least thing that is before us, much less into these great things so much above us, which God hath been pleased to reveal to us, and which need not have been revealed, if we could have known them without it. And, therefore, if there be any such thing as reason in us, nothing can be so contrary to it, as not to believe the great mysteries of the Gospel,—as the Divinity and Incarnation of the Son of God, although revealed by God himself,—because we cannot comprehend them. For by the same reason, if it may be so called, we must believe nothing at all, at least concerning God: for we can no more comprehend his omnipresence, his omniscience, his eternity, and other his divine perfections, than we can how three Persons are in one nature, and two natures in one Person. We can no more comprehend the divine nature, than we can the Trinity of Persons in it; and yet they, who pretend to be the great masters of reason, have so little of that which they pretend to, as to believe one, and not the other, although they have the same reason for both,—even the word of God himself,—and although nothing which God hath said in his holy word be so much above our reason, as it is contrary to all reason not to believe what he hath said.

Wherefore he having said, “That no man can overcome the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God,” we need look no further for a reason why we ought to believe it, it being as certain as God is true. Yet, nevertheless, it being a truth wherein

all men are highly concerned, that they may be more deeply affected with it, I shall endeavour to give you a little more light into it, by setting before you, and proving, these three propositions:—

1. That no man can overcome the world but by Jesus Christ.

2. No man can do it by him, except he believe in him.

3. No man can believe in him for it, except he believe him to be the Son of God.

The truth of the first proposition will appear sufficiently, by shewing two things. 1st. That no man can overcome the world by himself, or his own strength. 2ndly. That there is no other way to do it but by Christ. As for the first, we need no divine revelation for it, for we cannot but be sensible of it ourselves. We find, we feel it by our own sad experience, that we have not strength enough in ourselves to withstand, much less to overcome, the world; but, do what we can, something or other in it will have power and dominion over us. And it is no wonder our first parents in their best estate, in their full strength, were overcome by it. How, then, is it possible for any one now to overcome it? I know that many, both ancient and modern philosophers, have talked very finely of vice and virtue; but it was mere talk. When it came to the point, they were no more able of themselves to subdue the one, and practise the other, as they ought, than they were to remove mountains, and create worlds. Indeed our whole nature is corrupted, and all the powers of our souls are out of tune; and, therefore, our actions must needs be so, whether we see it or no. And lest we should take no notice of it ourselves, God himself hath often put us in mind of it, assuring us, “That there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not⁹.” That the wickedness of man is great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil

⁹ Eccles. vii. 20.

continually¹. And, “that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves².” And if we cannot so much as think, how can we do any thing that is good of ourselves? And if we can do nothing at all, how can we do so great a thing as to overcome the whole world? No; there is no way possible for us ever to do it by our own strength.

But, blessed be God, he hath found out, or rather he hath made, a way for us to do it; but he hath made only one way, and that is by Jesus Christ; who hath told us with his own mouth, “Without me ye can do nothing³,” whereby he hath excluded all possibility of our overcoming the world, subduing sin, or doing any thing that is good, without him. To the same purpose is that of the apostle, where he saith, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” but the name of Christ⁴. Where, by being saved, we are not to understand, as men commonly do, only our eternal salvation in heaven, but all things necessary in order to it; and especially our being saved from our sins, from the strength as well as from the guilt of them; which we can never be any other way but by Christ: but by him we may; this being the great end wherefore he hath done and suffered so much for us. “For this purpose” it was, that “the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil⁵.” For this purpose he “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works⁶.” For this purpose he was raised up, that he might turn “every one of us from his iniquities⁷.” For this purpose he was “exalted with the right hand of God, that he might be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins⁸.” And for this purpose “he ever liveth to make intercession for us, that he might be

¹ Gen. vi. 5.² 2 Cor. iii. 5.³ John xv. 5.⁴ Acts iv. 12.⁵ 1 John iii. 8.⁶ Tit. ii. 14.⁷ Acts iii. 26.⁸ Ib. v. 31.

able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him⁹." And, therefore, we cannot doubt but by him we may be enabled to overcome the world, and all things in it, which can any way impede our salvation by him; especially considering that, although the first Adam was overcome by it, He, the second, hath overcome it, both for himself and us. "Be of good cheer," saith he, "I have overcome the world¹." So that now, under his banner, we fight against a conquered enemy, and therefore need not fear being overcome, so long as we keep close to him, who hath all power given him both in heaven and earth, and is always ready to give us as much of it as we have occasion for in any of our spiritual conflicts; insomuch that, as we can do nothing without him, there is nothing but we can do by him. As St. Paul found by experience, when he said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me²."

And as no man can overcome the world but only by Christ, so no man can overcome it by him without believing in him. That the whole of our salvation, and so this, as the main part of it, depends upon our believing in Christ, is so plain to any one that reads the Gospel, that I need not insist upon it. I shall only observe, in general, that in the verse before my text, St. John ascribes our victory over the world so entirely unto our faith, as if itself was the victory itself; saying, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith:" that St. Paul calls faith a shield, wherewith we are "able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked³:" that St. Peter saith, "God purifies our hearts by faith⁴:" that when Satan had desired to have the said apostle and his brethren, Christ only prayed for him, that his faith might not fail⁵; and that Christ himself saith expressly, that "we are sanctified by faith that is in him⁶." And elsewhere he saith, that "he that believeth in him is not con-

⁹ Heb. vii. 25.³ Eph. vi. 16.¹ John xvi. 33.⁴ Acts xv. 9.⁶ Acts xxvi. 18.² Phil. iv. 13.⁵ Luke xxii. 32.

demned; but he that believeth not is condemned already⁷." And again, "I am come a light," saith he, "into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness⁸." And, to name no more, he saith, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered⁹." From all which it appears, that we cannot overcome either the world or the devil; we cannot be enlightened, nor purified, nor sanctified, nor enabled to do any thing that is good by Christ himself, except we believe in him, and except we believe so as to abide continually in him, as a branch doth in the vine, so as to receive nourishment and virtue from it to bring forth fruit. It is by faith that we are engrafted into Christ, and made members of his body, and so partake of that Holy Spirit which proceeds from him. And, therefore, unless we believe in him, we can derive no power or virtue at all from him, no more than as if there was none at all in him. When he was upon the earth, in his own country, it is said, "He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief¹." And so it is to this day. The great reason why he doth not many mighty works for us, and that we do not many mighty works by him, is merely because of unbelief. Men will not believe in him, and then it is no wonder they are never the better for him, nor able to overcome the world, and come to God by him; it being as impossible to do any good without believing on him, as it is to do it without him.

But then, in the last place, no man can believe in Christ for it, except he believe him to be the Son of God, of the same nature and glory with the Father.

⁷ John iii. 18.

⁹ Ib. xv. 4—6.

⁸ Ib. xii. 46.

¹ Matt. xiii. 58.

For our believing in him for power to overcome the world, necessarily implies our believing him to be both able and willing to give it us; and, by consequence, we trust and depend upon him for it. But this we neither ought nor can do, except we believe him to be God. We ought not to do it, because we are commanded to "trust in the Lord with all our heart²," and, therefore, in nothing else. Indeed, to trust in any thing besides God, is one of the greatest sins that a man can be guilty of: it is idolatry itself: it is giving that honour to a creature, which is due only unto God. And yet this all are guilty of, who do not believe Christ to be God, and yet trust in him as if he was. But I think we have no great cause to fear that any, at least considering persons, should fall into that sin. For I do not see how any man that considers what he doeth, can possibly believe and trust in Christ for any thing at all, much less for his salvation, except he believe him to be the Lord God Almighty.

To make this as plain as I can: there are two things absolutely necessary to our eternal salvation, as without which we cannot be capable of it. First, that our sins, whereby we have offended Almighty God, be all pardoned. Secondly, that we overcome the world, so as to be and do good in it. But we can believe in Christ for neither of these things unless we believe him to be God.

As for the first, we cannot but be all sensible that we have often broke those holy, wise, and righteous laws, which Almighty God, our Maker, hath prescribed to us, and that we have thereby incurred his displeasure, and made ourselves obnoxious to the death which he at first threatened, and to all the curses that he hath denounced against those who continue not in all things which he hath commanded, to do them³. By which means, although many, by reason of the blindness and hardness of their hearts, do not, or will not see it, yet we all stand upon the brink of the bottom-

² Prov. iii. 5.

³ Gal. iii. 10.

less pit; and should God open our eyes, and shew us the danger we are in, we should not be able to endure ourselves, but should be ready to sink down into horror and despair. What then shall we do? Whither shall we go for succour? Shall we go to God? It is true, he is merciful; but he is just too. And, besides, it is he whom we have offended; and, therefore, cannot in reason expect any favour at his hands, no more than the fallen angels can, without making him satisfaction; much less can we imagine that he should break his word for us. But shall we then go to Christ? If he be not God, what can he do for us? Can a creature appease the wrath, satisfy the justice, or defend us against the power, of his and our Almighty Creator? No more than we can do it for ourselves. What if he spent his whole life in doing good? it was no more than every man is bound to do. And what though he suffered a cruel death; what is that to us? If he was a mere human person, as every one of us is, both his actions and his sufferings must needs all terminate in himself; we can be no more concerned in them, than we are in the life and death of any other great and good man; much less can all mankind be said to suffer that death in him which God hath threatened: for, according to this supposition, none at all were in him, he being only a single human person of himself; as every other man is. How, then, can any one who doth not believe him to be God, notwithstanding believe and trust in him for the pardon of his sins, and for God's reconciliation to him? No man certainly can do it, but he that can believe impossibilities, and reconcile plain contradictions; that is, no man that hath either sense or reason.

Whereas, on the other side, he who believes Christ to be God as well as man, hath all the reason in the world to believe in him for God's mercy in the pardon of all his sins. For he being God, of the same substance with the Father, and having taken upon him not any particular human person, but the human nature in general, and united it to his own divine

Person, whatsoever he suffered in that nature could not but have respect to all mankind, as partaking of that nature wherein he suffered; and he who suffered in it being of infinite power and glory, his sufferings could not but be of infinite value and merit, and so fully satisfactory to the divine justice for the sins of mankind in general: wherefore he is said to have “tasted death for every man⁴,” and to be made a “propitiation for the sins of the whole world⁵.” For he, the second Adam, having suffered that death in the whole nature of man, which God had threatened to it in the first, he hath thereby taken off our obligations to undergo it; and “hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us⁶.” And, therefore, he who believes him to be God as well as man, may well believe in him for pardon, to whom “all the prophets give witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins⁷.”

The same may likewise be said of grace and power to overcome the world, and do good. No man can believe in Christ for that neither, but he who believes him to be truly God; for it is God that sanctifies us⁸. It is God that “purifies our hearts⁹.” It is God that is the author of “every good and perfect gift¹.” It is God that makes us “perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight².” “It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure³.” In a word, it is God that is the chiefest, the only good in the world, without whom nothing can either be or do so: and, therefore, he who doth not believe Christ to be God, how can he believe in him for such things, which none can do but only God; as the Scriptures plainly assert, and he himself also must believe, if he believe them to be the word of God? Such a man’s faith would contradict and destroy itself, and so be no longer faith,

⁴ Heb. ii. 9.⁵ 1 John ii. 1, 2.⁶ Gal. iii. 13.⁷ Acts x. 43.⁸ Exod. xxxi. 13.⁹ Acts xv. 9.¹ James i. 17.² Heb. xiii. 21.³ Phil. ii. 13.

but mere fiction and fallacy. But if we believe Christ to be God, as all men ought, and have all the reason in the world to do, then we may well believe in him for grace and virtue, every thing that is necessary to our overcoming the world, and so to our being holy here, and happy for ever. We may well believe he can give it us, if he will, because he is God: and we may as well believe he will do it if he can, because he is man, and became so on purpose to qualify himself for it; that we, who can never overcome the world without him, may be enabled to do it by him, as I have shewn already we may.

Wherefore, to sum up the whole argument, seeing we can never overcome the world, but only by Jesus Christ; seeing we can never do it by him, unless we believe in him; and seeing we can never believe in him, unless we believe him to be the Son of God, of the same nature with the Father; therefore we may truly say with the apostle, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Now, from the premisses thus briefly laid down many very useful inferences may be drawn; I shall instance at present only in three. First, from hence we may observe the absolute necessity of believing the great article of our Christian religion, that upon which our whole religion is founded,—even that Jesus Christ, the founder of it, is not only a mere man, or any other creature, but the eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father. For as it is truly declared in the profession of our faith, commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius, 'Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith:' As, that 'there are three Persons in the Godhead;' that 'Jesus Christ is the second of these Persons,' the Son of God; and, 'that he is both God and man.' 'This is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved:' for he cannot overcome the world, and, by consequence, can do nothing in order to his salvation. Wherefore, as ever ye desire

to be saved, you must be sure to continue firm and stedfast in this faith. Let not any Arians, Socinians, Turks, or Mahometans, ever seduce you from it: and if any attempt to do it, look upon them as the devil's agents and factors, employed by him to ruin and destroy you; for so they will certainly do, if they can ever by his help prevail upon you to deny the Godhead of Christ your Saviour, that being in effect to deny him to be your Saviour: for that none can be, but only God. And if he do not save you, I am sure no body else can.

In the next place, we may from hence also observe what ground we have to believe that Article of our Church which saith, 'They also are to be had accursed, that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature: for Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.' For to this we may add from what we have now heard, that the same Holy Scripture doth also declare, "That no man can overcome the world, and so be saved by Christ himself, but he who believes him to be the Son of God." From whence it necessarily followeth, that whatsoever law or sect a man professeth, and how diligent soever he may be to frame his life according to it, yet, unless he believes this, he cannot be saved. I know some have thought this to be very hard; that they who never heard of Christ, and therefore cannot believe in him, should not be saved, how well soever they live. But the world is not governed by men's thoughts, but by God's will. It may seem as hard to any one that considers, that none of the apostate angels are saved. But none ever thought this to be so; why then should they think so of that? But let men think what they please, God hath said, "That no man can overcome the world, but he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God:" and therefore that must be true.

Lastly, From hence we may observe what course we

must take if we desire to overcome the world so as to get to heaven : we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, of infinite power and goodness, most perfectly able and willing to do every thing for us, and in us, that is any way necessary to our salvation. And, therefore, we must believe and trust on him for grace to repent of all our sins ; for God's mercy in the pardon of them ; for power to overcome the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil ; and for such influences of his Holy Spirit, as will make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. We must heartily and constantly use the means which he hath appointed for our obtaining grace and salvation ; but we must keep our faith and confidence fixed upon him, and upon him only, to make them effectual to the purposes for which he hath appointed them. If we do this, as we need not, so we ought not to doubt but that he will so assist, conduct, and guide us through the whole course of our life, that at length we shall attain the end of our faith, even the eternal salvation of our souls, by him : to whom, with the Father, and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory now and for ever.

SERMON XXI.

HOLINESS THE GREAT DESIGN OF THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION.

TITUS ii. 14.

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

THESE words are part of the argument which the apostle here brings why we should live “soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;” and it adds a great deal of force and strength to it; for, having minded us of the “blessed hope which we look for at the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” that so he might excite and encourage us the more to the practice of what the grace of God here teacheth, he adds, moreover, for our better encouragement, what this great God, who then will appear in glory, hath done for us in order to our attainment of the blessedness we hope for, when he shall thus appear, “who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us,” &c.

Which words containing the whole mystery of our salvation by Jesus Christ, we, who hope to be saved by him, cannot but look upon ourselves as highly concerned to understand the full meaning and intent of them; which that I may explain unto you as clearly as possibly I can, without taking them in pieces, I shall

give you the true sense and purport of the words as they lie in order; for, indeed, every word in the text is very emphatical and significant, and, by consequence, much to be observed by all that set themselves in good earnest to look after heaven and eternal glory.

As for the first word "who," it needs not much explaining; for you cannot but all understand whom he means, or which is the antecedent to this relative, even "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Only it is to be observed that, for the right apprehending the mystery of our redemption by him, it is necessary that we understand those words conjunctly, not conceiving of Christ as only God, or only man, but as God-man; or, as it is here more fully expressed, as "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;" as one, who, being begotten of the Father from eternity, was therefore "the great God;" and, being born of his mother in time, thereby became man; and, being thus both God and man, is likewise our Saviour.

2. "Who gave himself;" that is, who, being "the great God, gave himself to be made man¹;" and, being God and man, he gave himself to be betrayed, apprehended, accused, condemned, crucified, not only in appearance, but really and truly, ἀληθῶς ἀπέθανε, οὐ δοκῆσει, οὐ φαντασίᾳ, Ignat. And he gave himself voluntarily, freely, of his own accord, without any force, violence, or compulsion from any other. Judas, indeed, betrayed him to the Jews; but his betraying him had been in vain, unless Christ had given himself². Pilate delivered him to the soldiers; but he could not have had that power over him, "unless himself had given it him from above³." He was derided, scoffed at, accused and condemned as a malefactor; yet so that none could have spoken one word against him, had not himself given them breath to do it. He was crucified by the Jews, not because he could not help it, but because he would not. And when he was upon the cross, he died indeed, not be-

¹ Phil. ii. 6, 7.

² John xviii. 4, 5.

³ Ib. xix. 11.

cause he could not save his own, but because he had a mind to save our lives: for they could not force his soul from his body, but he voluntarily gave up the ghost, and that too immediately after he had cried with a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit⁴." And seeing he had so much strength still as to cry aloud, he could not have been so near death, but that himself was pleased to die, and that before the two malefactors that were crucified with him, whose legs were forced to be broken that they might die. When he was already dead, or had yielded up the ghost, or, as it is in the Greek, ἀφῆκε τὸ πνεῦμα, *emisit Spiritum*, sent his Spirit from him, so that, *emisit Spiritum, non amisit*. Ambros. *Spiritum cum verbo sponte dimisit*. Tertul. *Non enim deseruit invitus, sed quia voluit quum voluit, et quomodo voluit*. Aug.; all was still done with his own will, as himself also assures us⁵. And hence it is, that he is here said to have given himself. Who gave

3. "Himself." Himself, not gold, not silver, not lambs, not calves, nor men, but himself⁶. Sometimes he is said to have given his flesh⁷, sometimes his body⁸, sometimes his blood⁹. But here he is said to have given himself, his whole self, not only his soul or his body, but himself, soul and body, and all he had or was; himself, God-man, which was certainly the greatest gift that was ever given, the highest price that was ever paid for any thing in the world.

But what, or whom did he give himself for? "For us." "Who gave himself for us;" not for himself, not for angels, but for us men; for us corrupt, sinful, and rebellious mortals upon earth; who, by nature, are enemies to God, and to every thing that is good. It was for us that he gave himself, not only dying for our sakes, but in our stead; for which we must know that he is sometimes said to "give himself for our sins¹,"

⁴ Luke xxiii. 46.

⁵ John x. 17, 18.

⁶ 1 Pet. i. 28.

⁷ John vi. 51.

⁸ Luke xxii. 19.

⁹ Ver. 20.

¹ Gal. i. 4.

that is, to make satisfaction to divine justice for them. But here he is said to have given himself for us; that is, he gave himself to suffer death in our stead ².

And that you may know wherefore Christ thus suffered for us; it follows, "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us." For the opening of which, consider,

1. "God made man upright ³."

2. But upon commission of the first sin all mankind became obnoxious to death, which was before threatened against it ⁴. And it not standing with the justice and honour of God not to make good his word, and do as he hath said, hence the whole race of Adam are subject to death, even eternal as well as temporal ⁵.

3. Hence Christ having undertaken to save or redeem us from that death which we are all obliged to suffer, it was necessary that he should undergo it for us; which he accordingly did: and his death being accepted of by God instead of ours, hence he is here said to have given himself for us, because he delivered up himself to suffer that death which was due to us. Hence, also, he is said properly to have redeemed us, because "he gave his life a ransom for us ⁶." A ransom, that is, as the Greek word *λύτρον* signifies, "a price of redemption." And so it is elsewhere said, "that he gave himself a ransom for all ⁷," *ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων*, "a price of redemption for all;" and so it is the same in effect with this in my text, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us:" for, laying down his own life instead of ours, hereby he hath redeemed us from that obligation to death which we before lay under, he having undergone that death for us, which in the first Adam was threatened against us; so that God's justice being fully satisfied, we may escape that death which before we were subject to. Thus therefore it is, that Christ hath redeemed us.

² 1 Pet. iv. 1. Rom. v. 8.

⁴ Gen. ii. 17.

⁵ Rom. v. 17, 18.

⁷ 1 Tim. ii. 6.

³ Eccl. vii. 29.

⁶ Matt. xx. 28.

“From all iniquity,” which is the next expression to be considered. “That he might redeem us from all iniquity,” that is, from the guilt of sin, and from those obligations to death and punishment, which our iniquities had brought upon us: so that now our iniquities shall not be imputed to us, nor we be obliged to suffer for them, for none of them: “For he hath redeemed us from all iniquity,” both original and actual; from that contracted by our first parents, and from those which ourselves have committed in our persons; whether they be sins of omission, or sins of commission; sins of ignorance, or sins of wilfulness; open, or secret sins; sins of a lighter tincture, or sins of a deeper dye. For he “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.”

O blessed Jesu! when shall we be able to praise and magnify thy name, and to render thee thanks sufficient for this thy unspeakable love and compassion to fallen man? That ever thou shouldst regard and pity such worthless and sinful worms as we are, so far as to lay down thine own life to ransom ours! Who are we, or what was our father’s house, that thou who inhabitest eternity, God co-equal with the Father in glory, power, and majesty, infinitely happy in the enjoyment of thine own perfections,—that thou shouldst vouchsafe to condescend so far as to take our frail nature into thine own all-glorious and divine Person, and in it to suffer for those very sins which we, ungrateful wretches, have committed against thyself; that thou shouldst come down from heaven to earth only to raise us up from earth to heaven; that thou, the Son of God, shouldst become the Son of man, that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God; that thou shouldst be derided, that we might be honoured; thou condemned, that we might be absolved; and die, that we might live! O what tongue is able to express, what heart to conceive, how infinitely we are all obliged to love and serve thee, to praise and honour thee, to bless and magnify thy name unto all eternity; “who gavest thyself for us, that thou mightest redeem us from all ini-

quity;" and not only so, but "purify to thyself a peculiar people!" Indeed this is that which perfecteth our redemption, and maketh it both full and effectual; and therefore it deserveth to be seriously weighed and considered by us: for we must not think that our Saviour came into the world only to expiate our sins, and to take off our obligations to punishment for them; but he came likewise to cleanse us from our sins, and to make us holy: or, as it is here expressed, "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and," also, "purify unto himself a peculiar people." Where we may observe,

I. That one great end why Christ "gave himself for us" was, that he "might purify us;" that is, make us pure and holy, good and pious creatures. For the opening of which we must know,

1. We by nature are all defiled with sin, as well as guilty of it; our hearts being naturally averse from whatsoever is good, and inclined to evil; and all the faculties of our souls so out of tune, that we can do nothing as we ought to do it.

2. So long as we are in this condition, we are altogether incapable of enjoying God, and, by consequence, of being happy; for our happiness consisteth only in the vision and fruition of the chiefest Good: in order unto which, it is indispensably necessary that our minds be bent, and our wills and affections inclined, towards him; otherwise it is impossible for us to take any pleasure or delight in the beholding and enjoying of him; or, rather, it is impossible for us to behold and enjoy him at all. But so long as we remain in the same condition wherein we came into the world, without repenting or being converted to him, it is plain that we have no propensity at all, or inclination towards him; but have rather a strange kind of averse-ness from him, if not an absolute antipathy against him; as one not only unlike, but directly contrary to, our impure and sinful temper and disposition. And, therefore, until our minds be changed, and our inclinations taken off from sin and turned unto God; that

is, in Scripture language, until we have repented, and so be made truly holy and like to God, we are no more capable of enjoying any complacency and satisfaction in the contemplation of the divine perfections, nor, indeed, of contemplating aright upon them, than a blind man is capable of distinguishing colours, or a deaf man of being ravished with sounds; no more than a brute beast is capable of surfeiting himself upon the pleasures of a mathematical demonstration. This is all our conditions by nature; thus it is, and thus it will be with us, until our minds be altered, and our souls converted from sin to God: till then, as we shall not enjoy heaven though we could, so we cannot though we might; not being at all qualified for the participation of such pure and spiritual joys as those are.

3. Hence our blessed Saviour having undertaken to save and bring us to heaven, it was necessary that he should likewise fit and qualify us for the enjoyment of the happiness which is to be there had; which he, therefore, accordingly undertook to do by cleansing us from our sins, and purifying us to himself. And that this was one great and principal end of his taking our flesh upon him, and dying, or giving himself, for us, is not only expressly asserted here in my text, but it is plain, likewise, from the whole tenour of the Gospel, which teacheth us all along, that, as he came to reconcile God to us by dying for our sins, so he came to reconcile us to God by cleansing us from our sins, and making us truly holy. For “his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness⁸.” And he was “sent to bless us, in turning away every one of us from his iniquities⁹.” So that “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin¹.” Yea, he was therefore called Jesus, that is, “a Saviour,” because he came to “save his people from their sins²,” that is, from the filth and power, as well as from the guilt and punish-

⁸ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

¹ 1 John i. 7.

⁹ Acts iii. 26.

² Matt. i. 21.

ment, of sin. And he, therefore, gave himself for us, that he might sanctify us throughout, and make us "holy and without blemish³."

4. "Christ thus giving himself for us," not only to "redeem us from all iniquity," but also "that he might purify us to himself;" hence by his death and passion he did not only satisfy God's justice for our sins, but likewise merited the power of bestowing the Spirit upon us, and so of infusing true grace and virtue into us, whereby we may be enabled to forsake our former sins, and for the future to perform sincere and evangelical obedience to all the moral law: so that as our persons are justified only by his merit imputed, so are our natures sanctified by his Spirit imparted to us; whereby,

(1.) He enlightens our minds, and rectifies our judgments, concerning all things that have any reference to our future estate; cheering up our apprehensions concerning God, and possessing our hearts with a due sense of his greatness, power, and glory, and with a thorough belief that he is the chiefest good, and that happiness can be had in none but him; convincing us also of the sinfulness of sin, and the beauty of holiness, of the vanity of all things here below, and of the glory that is above. And it is a true saying of St. Austin, *Non minus necessarium esse menti illuminationem, quam oculis lumen.*

(2.) He purifies, or amends, the will, inclining it to follow the dictates of the practical understanding, so as to choose what it represents as truly good, and to refuse what it dictates to be evil. This is the great blessing which God hath promised under the notion of "a new heart, and a new spirit⁴." Whereby such as are in Christ are made "new creatures⁵." For all their affections are by this means turned into another channel, and are fixed upon new objects.

(3.) Hence our actions always following the temper and inclination of our minds, they also become pure

³ Eph. v. 25—27.

⁴ Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26.

⁵ 2 Cor. v. 17.

and holy, or, at least, such as God for Christ's sake will accept of.

Thus it is that Christ purifieth us to himself; and thus you and I may be purified by him, and shall, too, if we do but sincerely endeavour to do what we can ourselves, and trust in him for his assistance to enable us to do what otherwise we cannot: so that now, if we be not all pure and holy, if we be not all as real and true saints as ever lived, it is our own fault: for Christ is always present and ready to assist us, if we do but apply ourselves unto him for it; and himself hath told us, that such as come to him he will in no wise cast out⁶. O what cause then have we all to praise and to give thanks unto him, and to say as it is, in Rev. i. 5, 6!

But it is to be further considered, that as Christ came to purify us, so he purifieth us to himself; for "he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people:" so that one great reason why he purifies us is, that we should for the future be his; not sin's, not Satan's, not the world's, not our own, but wholly his, his real disciples, his faithful servants, his peculiar and obedient people. For the better understanding of which we must consider,

i. Man was created in a free estate, subject to none but God, under whom he was constituted lord and master of all terrestrial creatures, every thing upon earth being subject to his power, as his body was to his soul, his senses to his will, his will to his reason, and his reason unto God.

ii. By sinning against his Maker, he thereby forfeited all his power, and became a mere slave and vassal to all things which before were subject to him; so that now we are all born slaves, slaves to sin, slaves to the world, slaves to Satan, slaves to our own lusts and corruptions⁷. And the reason is, because we are "sold under sin⁸," and that not only by our first parents, but too apparently by ourselves; for naturally we are like

⁶ John vi. 37. ⁷ Rom. vi. 17. 2 Pet. ii. 19. 2 Tim. ii. 26.

⁸ Rom. vii. 14.

Ahab, “who sold himself to work evil in the sight of the Lord¹.”

And hence it comes to pass that sin exercises so much power and tyranny over us, that we are never our own men, being always at the beck and command of sin; as you may all find by too sad and daily experience; one sin drawing you this way, and another sin dragging you that way, as itself pleaseth.

iii. Christ came to redeem us from this thralldom, and assert us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, by subduing our sins under us, and so purifying us to himself, that we should no longer be at sin's, but at his service and command, so as not to regard the dictates of our own carnal reason, nor yet the precepts of our own headstrong corruptions; but devoting ourselves wholly to observe those laws and commands which he hath laid upon us. For this was one great end why he redeemed us; and it is the only recompence that we can give him for it. And, moreover, there is all the reason in the world that we should give ourselves to him who gave himself for us, and laid down so great a price as his own blood for our redemption to himself: to himself I say; for it is in the nature of all purchases and redemptions, that they that purchase or redeem a thing have it for the future to themselves. How much more in this, the greatest purchase that ever was made, the Son of God himself having redeemed us with the price of his own blood! Surely we cannot but be infinitely obliged to live to him that died for us, so as to employ all the faculties of our souls, and members of our bodies, in his service, and for his glory. As the apostle argues, 1 Cor. vi. 20.

Neither is it sufficient that we be Christ's people only in general; but we must be, too, his “peculiar people.” For so saith the apostle, “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people;” λαὸν περιούσιον, “a dear, a precious, an excellent people above all other.”

¹ 1 Kings xxi. 20.

In the Old Testament it answers the Hebrew word סְגֻלָּה: which the LXX render by λαὸς περιούσιος, and we by a “peculiar people²,” sometimes “a special people³,” sometimes “a peculiar treasure⁴,” sometimes “his jewels⁵.” The Targum always interprets it by חֲבִיבִי, “beloved,” or “a people beloved.” Symmachus renders it ἐξάίρετος, “a special, a singular, an excellent people.”

And verily such as Christ effectually purifies to himself are, indeed, a peculiar people from all other people in the world.

1. They are a people of a peculiar temper and disposition from all other people. As Caleb is said to have been a man of another spirit from the rest of the children of Israel⁶, so are all such as Christ purifies; they are quite of another spirit from the men of this world; they have other thoughts, other affections, other desires, other hopes, other fears, other designs in the world, than other men use to have: so that, although they live and converse in the world without being conceited of themselves, or censuring others, yet they are a singular and peculiar people of themselves, as different from all other people as light is from darkness, as heaven is from earth, as holiness is from sin. For while all the rest of the world lies in wickedness, these do not only seem to be holy, and make a shew of piety; but they really and truly are a holy people, a people set apart and consecrated wholly unto God. And therefore a holy and peculiar people still go together⁷. And for this it is that God avouched them to be his peculiar people, that so they may “keep all his commandments⁸.” This is that which makes them so beloved of God, that he reckons them his treasure, his jewels, his special and peculiar people; because they have his image enstamped upon them, and so are like to him, holy as he is holy; Christ himself having

² Deut. xiv. 2.

⁴ Exod. xix. 5. Ps. cxxxv. 4.

⁶ Numb. xiv. 24.

⁸ Deut. xxvi. 18.

³ Ib. vii. 6.

⁵ Mal. iii. 17.

⁷ Deut. vii. 6; xiv. 2.

purified them to himself, and so made them his pure, and, by consequence, his peculiar people.

2. Such may justly be called a peculiar people also, because they have peculiar names and titles given to them in the Holy Scriptures. God having a peculiar propriety in them, he is, therefore, pleased to call them by peculiar names, whereby they may be distinguished from the rest of mankind. For they are called in Scripture *kings* and *priests*, and asserted to be made so by Christ, who purifies them to himself “a peculiar people⁹.” Neither are they called only kings and priests: but in the very abstract, “a kingly, or royal priesthood¹⁰.” So that as they are made new creatures, so are they called by new names¹.

3. They are honoured likewise with peculiar relations. For they who before might say to “corruption, Thou art our father, and to the worm, Thou art our mother, and our sister²,” may now say to the eternal God, Thou art our Father; to the Church, Thou art our mother; and to Christ himself, Thou art our brother. For God himself vouchsafeth to call himself their Father³, yea, and their husband too⁴; the Church is their mother⁵; and Christ calls them his brethren⁶.

4. They are invested with peculiar privileges, such as all other persons have no right or title to at all. For they have free admittance into God’s presence, and his ear is always open to their prayer⁷. Yea, and whatsoever God himself doth that hath any relation to them, it shall some way or other conduce to their good and comfort⁸. Πάντα συνεργεῖ, *all things work together*, all things that God doth by his ordinary providence, and, if our necessity require, all things which he can do by his extraordinary power.

5. They are endowed with peculiar interests. Though they may have little or nothing of this world’s goods,

⁹ Rev. i. 6.

¹⁰ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

¹ Isa. lx. 2—4.

² Job xvii. 14.

³ Luke xii. 32.

⁴ Isa. liv. 5. Hos. ii. 16.

⁵ Gal. iv. 26. Eph. v. 32.

⁶ John xx. 17. Rom. viii. 29.

⁷ Matt. xxi. 22.

⁸ Rom. viii. 28.

yet they are worth more than all the world besides. As our Saviour said, "His kingdom was not of this world;" so neither doth their estate lie here, but it lies in Christ's kingdom, that is, in the other world. They are interested in all his merits, and whatsoever he hath purchased by his death and sufferings; interested in all the promises of the gospel sealed unto them in the blood of Christ; interested in all the properties of God; his wisdom, power, and goodness being all engaged for them; interested in the prayers of all the saints upon earth; and interested in all the influences of the Holy Spirit to guide and direct them in all their ways.

6. They are instated in a peculiar inheritance, being heirs of God, and co-heirs with Jesus Christ, and so they are entituled to, and instated in a kingdom⁹; in the city of God¹; and eternal life². So that they shall be picked out of the rest of all mankind at the end of the world, to live with God, to behold his glory, admire his perfections, and enjoy his presence for ever.

This honour have all the saints, who may well be termed *a peculiar people*, seeing they have a peculiar temper, names, relations, privileges, interests, and inheritance, all different from other people, and peculiar to themselves; whom Christ is therefore here asserted "to have purified unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "Zealous of good works;" that is the greatest reason why they are Christ's peculiar people, because they serve him in a peculiar manner, being "zealous of good works;" not zealous for needless opinions; not zealous for idolatry and superstition; not zealous for parties and factions in the Church; but "zealous of good works." They are the proper objects of our zeal, as having an immediate respect to the glory of God, the ultimate end of all our actions³. And whatsoever zeal we have, unless it be for good works, it is both useless and dangerous. Be sure it is not the zeal of Christ's peculiar people; for those he

⁹ James ii. 5.

² Tit. iii. 7.

¹ Heb. xii. 22.

³ Gal. iv. 18.

purifies to himself to be zealous of good works, to prosecute and practise them with all the life and vigour, with all the zeal and fervency, that they can. But here we shall consider briefly two things:

1st. What we are here to understand by "good works." For which we must know that there are three things required to the making up of good works. It is necessary that the matter we do be good; that the end for which we do it be good; and that the manner of our doing it be good too. The matter must be such as God hath commanded, or at least allows of. For if it be any way contrary to the revealed will of God, whatsoever pretences men may make, be sure it cannot be good. And be the matter of an action ever so good, yet it is no good work unless the end be so too. For though a good end cannot make a bad action good, yet a bad end will always make a good action bad. And, therefore, whatsoever we do, we must be sure to avoid all bad and sinister ends and aims in the doing of it, as carnal interest, popular applause, vain glory, and the like; but our eye must be fixed principally upon "the glory of God⁴." Neither must we only regard the matter and end of our actions, but we must have a care how we perform them too, even with humility, faith, and obedience unto God. For no man can do a good work, that doth not therefore do it because it is good, and so obey God in the doing of it. Where all these things concur, the work is good; where any one of them is wanting, the whole is bad and sinful.

2ndly. What is it to be "zealous of good works?" It implies,

1. That their minds are bent and inclined to the doing of good works, so as to be willing and ready upon all occasions to do good⁵. That they be desirous of, and take pleasure in, the doing of them; that they rejoice to do good⁶, and "delight greatly in God's commands⁷."

2. That they study, contrive, and endeavour all ways

⁴ 1 Cor. x. 31.

⁵ 1 Tim. vi. 18.

⁶ Eccles. iii. 12.

⁷ Ps. cxii. 1; cxix. 143.

imaginable, to do all the good they can in their generation, so as to be always employed with zeal and earnestness in doing not only some, but all sorts of good works whatsoever; whether works of piety towards God, works of charity to the poor, or works of justice and equity towards all; pressing with undaunted courage and resolution through all difficulties whatsoever, to obey God and keep his commandments, so as never to be discouraged from doing good by any danger which we may seem to incur by it. Thus the apostles manifested themselves to be Christ's peculiar people, zealous of good works, by their care and diligence, by their zeal and constancy, in propagating the Gospel, maugre all the opposition that was made against them; nothing being able to deter them from it. And this we may lay down as a most certain truth, that as no man can get any good by doing ill, so neither can any man get harm by doing good.

3. They that would be zealous of good works do not only do good works themselves, but stir up others likewise to the doing of them; for he that is truly zealous himself cannot but endeavour to make others as zealous as himself is: and therefore to manifest ourselves to be zealous of good works, we must follow the apostle's counsel⁸.

Thus I have endeavoured to explain unto you the great ends of our Saviour's coming into the world, "who gave himself for us," &c. Now from what you have heard, none of you but may observe, that, as Christ came to save you from hell, and to bring you unto heaven, so, in order thereunto, he came to save you from your sins, and to make you holy. And, therefore, he expects that all you who hope to be saved by him should be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." He expects that you be eminent for piety and religion towards God, as also for charity and righteousness towards men; that you shine as lights in the world⁹. He expects that you do not content

⁸ Heb. x. 24.

⁹ Matt. v. 16.

yourselves with the bare profession of his religion, nor yet with reading the Scriptures, hearing of sermons, and praying now and then; but that you strive and study to excel the heathenish moralists, the Jewish and Christian Pharisees, yea, and your former selves too, in all true grace and virtue, in humility, in meekness, in temperance, in patience, in self-denial, in contempt of the world, in justice, in charity, in heavenly-mindedness, in faith, in praying, in fasting, "in denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and in living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world¹." What now remains but that knowing your Master's will, you should all do it? You see Christ came into the world to make you his "peculiar people, zealous of good works:" and such you must be before ever you come to heaven. Let me, therefore, solicit and beseech you in Christ's stead, abandon and forsake all your former practices which you know to be contrary to his pleasure and command; and for the future live like Christians indeed, like Christ's own proper and peculiar people. Devote every thing you have, every thing you are, every thing you can do, wholly to his service and honour; make now religion both your business and recreation; esteem it, as it is, your highest honour to honour him, and your chiefest pleasure to please him. Do not only do good works, but be zealous in the doing of them; never thinking that you can do enough for him that hath done and suffered so much as Christ hath done for you: still trusting on the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ both for the pardon of your defects, and for the acceptance both of your persons and performances before God. Do this, and your souls shall live. Leave this undone, and yourselves will be undone for ever. And think not to say within yourselves, that this is more than you can do; and that you, being conscious of your own infirmities, fear that you can never attain to so high a pitch of grace and virtue as Christ requireth of you.

¹ 2 Pet. i. 5, 6.

For whosoever thou art that thinkest so with thyself, I dare assure thee in the name of Christ, that if thou dost but endeavour after it as well as thou canst, he himself will enable thee to attain fully unto it. Though thou art weak, he is strong; and if thou dost but apply thyself aright to him, he will purify thee to himself one of his "peculiar people, zealous of good works." This was the great end of his coming into the world; and, therefore, you need not fear either his willingness or his power to do it. Why, therefore, dost thou complain of the power of sin, and labour under the burden of it? Go to Christ, and he "will give thee rest²." Do you, therefore, but sincerely endeavour to do what possibly you can yourselves, and trust in him for his assistance of his grace and spirit, as well as for pardon and forgiveness; and then you cannot miss of either. By this means every soul here present may be so purified as to be admitted into the number of God's "peculiar people, zealous of good works;" and by consequence be admitted ere long to heaven, there to praise him "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

² Matt. xi. 28.

SERMON XXII.

THE HOLINESS OF CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO BE
CONSPICUOUS.

MATT. v. 16.

“ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

WHEN it pleased the only-begotten Son of God to come down in his own person to visit his creatures upon earth, and to converse with men in their own likeness, he found that all flesh was corrupt, and mankind in general addicted either to idolatry or superstition; for all the world then were either Jews or Gentiles: but the Gentiles, although they had some confused notions of a Deity, such as dim-sighted nature could direct them to, yet, “when they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, but changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things¹.” Wherefore they being guilty of such gross idolatry in worshipping the creature more than the Creator, God blessed for evermore, God was justly pleased to give them up to uncleanness and vile affections, whereby their moral actions became as corrupt and bad as their unrighteous services; insomuch

¹ Rom. i. 21. 23.

that, although they still retained some common and natural distinctions betwixt good and evil, virtue and vice, among them; yet it was very rare to find one so much as striving to square his life according to them, so as to choose the good and refuse the evil, to embrace virtue and eschew vice, according to the knowledge they had of them. And if any did chance to offer at something like to virtue and goodness, yet it was still attended with so many failures and imperfections, that there was nothing of real virtue and goodness in it.

And as for the Jews, although they had the law and the prophets to direct them both in their religious and civil actions, in the service of God and behaviour to one another, yet came they very short of performing their duty to either; insomuch that the very Pharisees themselves, which were, as the apostle tells us, “the strictest sect of all the Jewish religion²,” they placed their religion only in external rites and ceremonies; as in frequent washing of themselves and vessels; in often fasting with sad countenances and disfigured faces; in long prayers, and hypocritical giving of alms, to be seen of men; in avoiding the company of such as themselves judged to be sinners; in paying the lesser tithes which the law required: and in the superstitious observation of all such things as they received by tradition from their forefathers, whereby they made the law of none effect; as Christ himself told them³.” Howsoever, by this means they were in great esteem among the people, being accounted the most devout and religious sect among them; notwithstanding they neglected the weightier matters of the law, as our Saviour himself told them to their faces, saying, “Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone⁴.”

When Christ, therefore, came into the world, finding

² Acts xxvi. 5.

³ Matt. xv. 6.

⁴ Ib. xxiii. 23.

mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, so strangely corrupted and debauched both in their principles and practices, although his great design was to offer up himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for their sins, yet it was necessary also that he should instil into them better principles, and acquaint them more clearly with the nature of true religion; without the practice whereof they would not be fitted, nor qualified, to partake of that happiness which he designed to purchase for them with his own blood. Hence, therefore, it was, that, although his death would have been as meritorious for us as soon as he was born, as it was afterwards, yet he thought good to live about thirty years, as it were *incognito*, in the world; and after that, too, before he would die for us, he continued above three years conversing with all that had the happiness to enjoy his presence. All which time he spent in working all sorts of real miracles for the confirmation of his doctrine, and in instructing mankind more perfectly than they had been before instructed in the principles of religion and morality; how to serve God, and love one another, better than they had done before. And intending now to introduce a new religion into the world, grounded upon clearer principles, and better promises, than any before had been, for this purpose he chose out several persons to be daily conversant with him, that so having his doctrine and discipline frequently inculcated into them, they might fully understand what he would have mankind both to believe and do, and so might faithfully transmit the same down to posterity, that all mankind might afterwards know how to come to heaven. To these persons, therefore, in a more particular manner, and to all in general that would come unto him, he revealed and explained the whole mystery of godliness; assuring them all along that the strictest sect of all their religion, even the Pharisees themselves, howsoever specious and plausible they seemed to others, yet they came very short of that which he required: "For," saith he, "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the

Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven⁵." Whereby he plainly acquainted them that, in order to their attaining everlasting happiness, it was absolutely necessary not only that they should be righteous, but that they should be more righteous than they were which hitherto had seemed the most righteous of all among them. And, therefore, he would not have them think that, because he came to die for their sins, he therefore came also to destroy the law and the prophets: "No," saith he, "I am come not to destroy, but to fulfil⁶." He came not to revoke the moral law, but to establish and enforce it with stronger arguments, and with greater obligations to obedience, than ever had been before. And, therefore, he would have all men know that they who would be his disciples, so as to be saved by him, must outvie and excel all others, whether Jews or Gentiles, in all manner of righteousness both to God and men. And this is that which he assures us of in my text, saying, "Let your light," &c.

In speaking to which words I shall not discourage your attention with putting any superfluous glosses upon them, nor yet with forcing any impertinent observations from them; but, in the same order wherein our Saviour spake them to his disciples, I shall endeavour so to explain them unto you, that you may all know the true intent and meaning of your Saviour in them, and for the future, I hope, order your lives and conversations accordingly.

First, saith he, "Let your light:" for the opening of which words we must look back to ver. 14, where our Saviour saith to his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." But elsewhere he saith of himself, "I am the light of the world⁷." And St. John, speaking of him, saith, "This is the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world⁸." So that Christ and true Christians are equally termed "the lights of the world," though in diverse respects: Christ is the

⁵ Matt. v. 20.

⁷ John viii. 12.

⁶ Ver. 17.

⁸ Ib. i. 9.

sun, they the beams that are sent from him; he the fountain, they the streams that flow from that fountain of light: or he is light in and from himself, as theirs is borrowed or derived from him, as the light of the moon is from the sun; so that he giveth light from himself to them, they reflect it from him to others. Before the Sun of righteousness arose with healing in his wings a spiritual darkness was spread over the face of the whole earth; but so soon as he appeared he presently shined upon his disciples, first enlightening them with true knowledge and understanding of the mysteries of salvation; and so they, being first enlightened by him, were thereby enabled to enlighten others after the same manner. And hence it is that Christ, the true light, calls his disciples also "The light of the world:" whereby he intimated to them how they should carry and behave themselves towards the rest of mankind: for nothing, you know, is more pure, nothing more piercing, nothing more acceptable, nothing more pleasant, nothing more advantageous, nothing more apparent than light: according to all which qualities of light our Saviour would have his disciples to deport themselves in this world; forasmuch as they being sent to open the eyes of others, the eyes of others would be sure to be upon them; as our Saviour intimates in the following words: "A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick: and it giveth light unto all that are in the house⁹." By which expressions he acquaints them, that now that he had endowed them with knowledge and grace as with light, they must not think to lie hid: but to be as a city upon an hill, apparent to all that pass by; and as a candle which being lighted, is not put under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that all may see it and receive light from it. And therefore he adds,

"Let your light so shine before men;" that is, the truth of that grace and faith which you have now re-

⁹ Matt. v. 14, 15.

ceived, and wherewith you are enlightened, let it not be obscured with the works of darkness, nor eclipsed by the interposition of earthly affections; but let it be so clear, so manifest, so perspicuous and apparent in your lives and conversations unto all men, "that they may see your good works," that is, that all may clearly see how far you excel others in the performance of all your duties both to God and men. For that we are to understand by "good works," not only works of charity, but whatsoever duties God requires of us, either to himself or others: all which are called "good works," not as if they were perfectly good, in every circumstance and *punctilio* which the law requires, as the papists would have it, producing these words to prove that all the works of good men were always good works, only because they are called here by the name; whereas nothing can be more plain than that the very best men do many bad works which are contrary to the law, and that their best works come very short of it. And, therefore, they are here called good works only because the matter of them is good; and as to the manner, they are as good as he that doth them can make them; who sincerely endeavours to form them to the law as near as he can; upon which account God for Christ's sake is pleased to accept of them as good works, yea, as "our" good works too; as our Saviour here intimates, saying, "That they may see your good works:" not as if they were or could be performed and made good by our own strength and power, as the Pelagians would gather from these words: whereas our Saviour here saith, "That they may see your good works," only in contradistinction to the good works of others; and because they are produced both in us, and by us; in us as the subject, and by us as the instrument; but still by the grace of God as the principal efficient Cause: as is plain from the last words, "That they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." From which words it is manifest that all the glory of good works is to be ascribed only unto God, not to the men that do

them, whereas, if they did them by their own strength, the glory would redound to them, and not to God.

But from these last words we may further observe, that God's glory should be the ultimate end of all our actions, according to that of the apostle, 1 Cor. x. 31. And, therefore, when he commands "that our light so shine before men, that others may see our good works;" we are not to end here, but to look further. For no man can do good works only to be seen of men; for he that doth any works only to be seen of men, by that very means makes them to be bad works. For this our Saviour, in this very sermon, doth expressly forbid¹. And in these very words, although he would have "our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works," yet he doth not say that we are therefore to do them that others may see them, and so make that one end of our actions; but only that we are so to do them that others may see them and glorify God for them: so that his glory is to be not only the ultimate, but the only end of all our good works. And therefore our Saviour propounds this as the only end why "our light should shine before men," even, "that they, seeing our good works, might glorify our Father which is in heaven," so as to give him thanks and praise for his assisting men in the doing of such good works, and to acknowledge the truth of that religion wherein he is pleased to vouchsafe us such assistances.

The words being thus particularly explained, it is easy to discover the true meaning and intent of them; which in general amounts to this: that they who embrace the Christian religion, and profess themselves to be Christ's disciples, should be eminent in good works, so as to excel the professors of all other religions; that every one that sees and duly weighs a Christian life and conversation, might be thereby convinced of the excellency of his religion above all others: or, that all such as are converted to the Christian faith should be, as the apostle words it, "blameless and harmless, as

¹ Matt. vi. 1. 5.

the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom they should shine as lights in the world²." This is to have "our light shine before men" indeed, when they can see what we are by what we do, and know us to be Christians by our being better than other men, and by our setting all others an example of true piety and virtue in our lives and conversations.

Now we being all in the number of those who profess themselves to be Christians, and, by consequence, are bound to be such excellent persons as these words import, there are two things which we are all very highly concerned to understand, in order to our right observing what is here enjoined. The first is, Wherein a Christian should excel all persons of other persuasions? And then, secondly, What reasons he hath to do so?

The first question, Wherein a Christian should excel others? supposes that men of other religions, as Jews, heathens, or Mahometans, may have some shadow or resemblance of virtue in them, and may do some things like to good works; but that they that are of the Christian religion should excel them all in being and in doing good; and so that it is not enough or sufficient for Christians, that they be or live like other men; but they must exceed not only the vulgar sort of pretenders to virtue and morality, but the highest and exactest moralists too that ever lived without the pale of the Church, howsoever eminent they have been in the esteem of men for any virtue or seeming goodness; and that in these three things especially, in the sincerity, universality, and constancy, of good works.

The first thing wherein Christians ought to excel, is sincerity; where by sincerity I mean that act, or rather habit of the mind, whereby we do good works not out of any ends or sinister designs, but out of pure obedience to the commands of God; so as not only to do what God commandeth, but therefore only to do it be-

² Phil. ii. 15.

cause God hath commanded it;—a thing which the heathens never dreamt of, or, be sure, were very defective in, forasmuch as they neither rightly believed in the true God, whose commands they were, nor knew them to be his commands; and, by consequence, although they did the thing which was commanded by God, yet they could not be said to obey God's commandment, in that they did not reflect upon his authority in the doing of it, so as to do it upon that account—because he was pleased to command it; wherein certainly the very essence of true obedience doth consist; insomuch that, howsoever great and good our works may seem to men, they will not be so esteemed by God, neither are truly such in themselves, unless we do eye and respect God, and his commands, in the doing of them; without which brute beasts may do good works as well as men. As, for example, you give an alms to the poor, you feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and the like; and it is a good work if you do it out of obedience to God; otherwise you do no more than the ravens did that fed Elijah: for their feeding of the prophet was certainly as good a work as to the matter of it, as your feeding of the poor can be. But I suppose you will all grant, that there is more required of us that are rational creatures, in order to our doing good works, than what the fowls of the air can do; and that we being endowed with reason, whereby we are capable of reflecting upon God himself, in doing what he commands, we are bound to do so; or else we cannot be said to obey his commands.

Now this obedience to the commands of God being so absolutely necessary to the very essence and constitution of good works, hence we may plainly see the vast difference betwixt moral virtues and truly Christian graces; the one aiming no higher than to do the thing that is good, the other no lower than to do it because it is good. Morality teacheth us no more than to do the thing that is commanded, Christianity no less than to do it because it is commanded. And that is no true Christian grace that acts from any other

principle than this; neither can it be a good work that is done upon any other account. And hence it is that we justly assert the works which the Papists do so much boast of, to be no good works; forasmuch as they are performed not out of obedience to God, but from self-interest, even out of a design to merit something by them for themselves; which overthrows the very foundation of good works, which can be built upon nothing but obedience unto God. And, besides, it is a groundless, absurd, and ridiculous thing, to think that poor, finite creatures should merit any thing by what they do from Almighty God, from whom they receive whatsoever they have, or are, and so the very power, too, by which they do it; so that whatsoever good works we do, we are more beholden to God than he to us for our doing them, it being only by him that we are enabled to do them: and, therefore, if we would live and act as Christians indeed, we must not have any such low and pitiful designs as these are in our observing the commands of God; neither must we content ourselves only with doing the thing that is commanded, but we must do it from a principle of true obedience to him that made and governs us and the whole world: by which means we shall not only excel all the professors of all other religions, but the greatest part of them too that profess themselves to be Christians.

And he that thus observes what God commands, merely because he commands it, he cannot but observe all the commands of God, there being the same reason for all the commandments as there is for one. This, therefore, is the next thing wherein a Christian should excel others, even in the universality of his obedience, observing not only one or two, not only many or most, but all the commands of God. "Then shall I not be ashamed," says David, "when I have respect to all thy commandments." As it is not enough to do what is commanded without having respect to the commandment, so neither is it enough to have respect to some, but it must be to all the commandments of

God; even as Zacharias and Elisabeth are said to be "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless³." And, indeed, unless we thus walk in all, we walk in none of the commandments as we ought to do: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all⁴." And, therefore, as ever you desire to obey the commands of God, you must not pick and choose, take some part, and let the rest alone: no, you must observe either all, or none. And by thus performing universal obedience to all the law of God, you will far exceed the strictest of all other religions; who generally take up with some few particular duties, instead of universal piety and obedience; as some of the heathens were eminent for justice, others for charity, some for contempt of the world, others for humility; and so some were eminent for one, others for other virtues; but we read of none that was eminent for all, or so much as endeavoured to be so. In this, therefore, we Christians ought to excel them by being "holy in all manner of conversation."

And that at all times too; which is the last thing wherein we ought to excel others, even in walking before the Lord, and serving him without fear "in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life⁵." And truly, as he that is not holy in all things is not holy at all, so he that is not holy at all times is never holy as he ought to be; especially, unless he sincerely endeavours at least to keep his heart in an equal frame of piety and charity at one time as well as at another.

Thus, therefore, it is that our blessed Lord expects, yea commands, that you and I should, as we are Christians, excel all other men in whatsoever is truly good and virtuous, as much as the light of the sun doth that of the planets, which are enlightened by it; especially we should exceed all in the sincerity, univer-

³ Luke i. 6.

⁴ James ii. 10.

⁵ Luke i. 74.

sality, and constancy, of our obedience to all the laws of God.

Having thus discovered how “our light should so shine before men, that others may see our good works;” or, wherein we who profess to believe in Christ should excel persons of all other persuasions whatsoever; we are now to consider what reasons there are for it;—Why Christians should be the best of men? A question necessary to be resolved in these days, wherein Christians themselves generally live as if they had no reason to be so good, much less to be better than others; as if Christ so died for their sins, that they might still live in them; or as if Christ had granted such indulgences and licences for sinning as his pretended Vicar at Rome doth; or, howsoever, as if they were not obliged to obey the moral law, as other persons are. For if we seriously survey the lives of Christians now with an impartial eye, we may with grief and sadness behold them so far generally from being better than others, that many others are better than them; the very Turks exceeding most Christians in their outward reverence and devotion towards God, in zeal for their religion, in charity to the poor, in faithfulness to their word, and uprightness in their dealings: yea, and the heathens themselves, who had nothing but the light of nature to guide them in their actions; how famous have many of them been in their generations for their justice and equity, for their temperance and sobriety, for their gratitude and liberality, for their freedom from luxury and passion, for their contempt of the world, and contentedness with their condition, and for their love and honour to virtue wheresoever they saw it; far beyond the generality of them that profess themselves to be Christians in these days! Which is a shame to our religion, and a reproach to the Gospel of Christ; giving too much occasion to the enemies of Christ to blaspheme his sacred name, and to think that they might learn as much from the heathen oracles, or Turkish Alcoran, as from the Gospel itself; seeing that they that have

the Gospel, and read it over and over again, and hear it constantly read and preached among them, are for the most part as much debauched in their principles and practices, as they that never heard of it. Which is a sad thing to consider, and that which we can never sufficiently lament; especially considering that for this God may justly take his Gospel from us, and give it to some nation that will improve it better than we have done; which, all things considered, we have just cause every moment to expect; especially, unless we make better use of it hereafter, than heretofore we have done. Which that you and I may for the future do, I shall now endeavour to shew what extraordinary advantages we have by the Gospel for the refining and reforming of our lives and conversation, and what invincible reasons there are why we who enjoy the Gospel should be better than all other persons that have it not, so as to exceed them far in all true virtue and godliness.

For first, we have clearer discoveries of God's will, and our duty, by the Gospel, than ever was before; yea, as clear as possibly can be made unto us. The moral law, as it was at first written upon the tables of man's heart, was so defaced by the fall of our first parents, that by the light of reason we can scarce read any one command aright. And though the same law was afterwards transcribed into two tables of stone, that all might have it before their eyes, yet there also it was not so legible as it is in the Gospel; as is plain from the strange misconstructions which the Jews had put upon it before our Saviour's time. But he now hath given us such clear interpretations of it, that he which runs may read it, and discern the full extent and latitude of it, there being nothing now of doubt or difficulty in it. And, therefore, our Saviour doth frequently compare his Gospel to light; because by its means we may so plainly see the things that belong to our everlasting peace, and understand our whole duty both to God and man: God himself having been pleased to come down in his own person, and explain

it to us; so that now we can have no excuse for indulging ourselves in any one sin whatsoever. And, therefore, Christ himself saith, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin⁶;" implying that no man can now in reason expect to palliate and excuse his sin under pretence of ignorance, after that he himself hath so clearly discovered our duty to us. Hence also it is that he elsewhere saith, that "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil⁷." As if he should have said, Although sin always deserveth death, yet now mankind deserves much more to be condemned to it; if, notwithstanding that the light of the Gospel is risen upon them, they shall still continue in the works of darkness, and so sin against the light itself. This is the reason, too, that he pronounceth that dreadful woe against the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida, saying, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had long ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you⁸." And what can you and I expect but that the same woe should be denounced against us, if, notwithstanding that more than ordinary light of the Gospel which hath shined among us, we do not turn to God, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind? Certainly, if we do not, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Turks and heathens, at the day of judgment, than for us. And therefore we had need to have a care of ourselves. For now that God hath spoke unto us not only by his prophets and apostles, but by his own Son too, and hath so clearly discovered unto us his will and pleasure concerning our behaviour to himself and others, he now expects that we faithfully perform it;

⁶ John xv. 22.⁷ John iii. 19.⁸ Luke x. 13, 14.

otherwise the Gospel itself,—the greatest of all mercies,—will in one day rise up in judgment against us; and unless our lives be better than others in time, our condition will be worse than theirs to all eternity.

Especially considering, in the next place, that we have not only clearer discoveries of our duty, but a more perfect example and pattern of piety in the Gospel than ever was before, or can be any where else: for there we have the life and actions of Christ himself recorded, “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth¹,” yea, whose whole life was but as one continued act of perfect piety towards God, or else of charity towards men; for he always “went about doing good²;” indeed there was nothing that he did but what was perfectly good; neither is there any grace or virtue whatsoever, but it appeared in him in its highest beauty and lustre. How humble was he in his carriage, how meek in his expressions, how faithful to his friends, how loving to his enemies, how fervent in prayer, how constant in preaching, how patient under his sufferings, how contented with whatsoever was laid upon him, how free from vice, how full of grace in every thing that he thought, or spake, or did! In all which he left us “an example that we should follow his steps³.” Yea, himself enjoins all those that would go after him so as to be his disciples, “to deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow him⁴.” And elsewhere, “Learn of me,” saith he, “for I am meek and lowly⁵.” From whence it is plain that Christ expects that you that profess to believe in him do come as near him as you can in all your duties both to God and man; and, by consequence, that, having so exact a pattern of true grace and virtue before your eyes, you imitate it far better than it is possible for them to do which never heard of it.

In the third place, we have by the Gospel the promises of greater assistances, such as never had been before. Indeed the great end of the Gospel, and of our

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 23.

² Acts x. 32.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 21.

⁴ Matt. xvi. 24.

⁵ Ib. xi. 29.

Saviour's coming into the world, was to be our Saviour, to save us from our sins, both from the guilt and strength of sin. The first he did by making satisfaction for us, by dying in our stead, and so suffering that in our nature, which otherwise we must have suffered in our own persons. The other he hath done by procuring such assistances for us, whereby we may be enabled sincerely to perform whatsoever is required of us. And that this was one great end of Christ's both incarnation and passion, is plain, in that the apostle tells us, that he was sent on purpose "to bless us, by turning every one of us from our iniquities⁶." And elsewhere it is said, that he "gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works⁷." And many such like places there are, which plainly shew that though it was not all, yet it was a great part of Christ's design in coming into the world, to make us holy; without which indeed the pardon of our sins, which he purchased by his death, would avail us nothing; holiness being indispensably required to the qualifying us for the enjoyment of real and eternal happiness; and, therefore, notwithstanding the pardon of our sins, we should be altogether incapable of the joys of heaven, unless our hearts be renewed, and our souls inclined to the living God; which can only be done by the assistance of the Holy Ghost: and therefore our Saviour tells us, that "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God⁸." But it is only by Christ our Saviour that we can partake of the graces and influences of the Holy Spirit: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done," saith the apostle, "but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour⁹." And hence it was that the Spirit was not given in so visible

⁶ Acts iii. 26.

⁸ John iii. 5.

⁷ Tit. ii. 14.

⁹ Tit. iii. 5, 6.

a manner until Christ was ascended ; but immediately before his ascension he told his disciples, "That he would send the promise of his Father upon them¹;" which was plainly nothing else but the Holy Ghost, which was before promised, and now fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And, therefore, whosoever would believe in Christ aright, must depend upon him not only for pardon, but likewise for the assistance of his grace and Spirit, for the mortifying of his lusts, and making him truly holy. And verily, the promises of the Gospel are so full and clear to this purpose, that it is nothing but the extreme neglect of ourselves, and the very height of obstinacy, that can keep us from partaking of them. For if you be truly sensible of your sins, and desire to be cleansed from them, and sincerely endeavour to do what you can yourselves, and believe in Christ, or trust on him to enable you to do what yourselves cannot; I say, if you do but do this, which none of you but may easily do, you cannot miss of receiving such supplies of grace, whereby your strong sins shall not only be subdued, but your dark mind so enlightened, your erroneous judgments so informed, your perverse wills so rectified, your inordinate affections so regulated, your hard hearts so softened, your proud spirits so humbled, your sleepy consciences so awakened, and your whole souls so renewed and sanctified, as to be truly "holy in all manner of conversation." For God never yet did, nor never will, fail any man that sincerely endeavoured to do what he could to serve him, and trusted in him for his assistance in doing what otherwise he could not. And, therefore, there is all the reason in the world that we, who have such promises and overtures of grace and assistance made unto us by God himself, by which, if we be not failing to ourselves we may be enabled from above to perform good works, and exercise all true grace and virtue; all the reason in the world, I say, that we should far exceed all other persons who have nothing but their own

¹ Luke xxiv. 49.

natural strength and power to act by in serving and obeying God, and in doing whatsoever he hath been pleased to require of us.

Especially, seeing, in the fourth place, that we in the Gospel have the greatest assurances of acceptance before God. Whatsoever endeavour any others make after piety and virtue, they have no assurance, nor any grounds to believe, that the supreme Being of the world will accept of their faint endeavours instead of real duties, or of their sincerity, if they had any, instead of perfection; or, rather, they had just cause to suspect and believe the contrary, even that whatsoever they did, and how sincere soever they were in doing of it, yet, it coming infinitely short of what infinite Justice required, it could never be accepted of by God. But we know and are assured, that if we do but sincerely endeavour unto the utmost of our power to adjust our actions unto the law of God, although at the best they come very short of it, yet, in and through Jesus, both our persons and performances shall be accepted by him: for this is most clearly held forth to us in the whole tenour and economy of the Gospel, which also is confirmed to us by so many and such real miracles, that there is no place left for doubting and unbelief, but we have stronger grounds to be assured of it than we have to believe any thing we see or hear, the eternal God himself having not only infallibly attested it, but confirmed that his infallible testimony by such miracles as exceed the greatest demonstrations in the world, especially by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, whereby, as the apostle argues², “He hath given assurance unto all men,” that Christ is ordained to judge the world in righteousness; and, by consequence, that whatsoever is asserted by, or concerning him, in the Gospel, is infallibly true; and so that if we believe in him, our former sins shall not only be pardoned, but our future duties shall be accepted by God, if they be sincerely performed, notwithstanding the manifold

² Acts xvii. 31.

failures and imperfections there may be in them; which is the highest obligation imaginable for us to use the utmost of our power and skill in the performing all virtuous and good actions that we can, seeing we are so much assured that, though they be not absolutely good in themselves, yet God will accept of them as such in Jesus Christ; which consideration, methinks, should have that power upon us as to force us all into stedfast resolutions, by the assistance of God's grace and Spirit, to leave no stone unturned, to neglect no grace, and omit no duty that is required of us, as knowing that God in Christ will be well pleased with it, and with us, too, for doing it; which should make us think scorn to be overtopped by those to whom the Gospel is not so clearly revealed, and purpose for the future to surpass and exceed them all in good and pious works.

And that which adds weight and force to all the foregoing reasons, is, that, in the last place, we have so great an assurance in the Gospel not only of our present acceptance, but future happiness, in case we practise what the Gospel requires of us. The heathens by the light of nature could discern but very little of a future life, and therefore were forced to resolve all the reward of virtue into virtue itself, making the satisfaction which arises from the exercise of it a sufficient recompence for our endeavours after it. The Mahometans speak much of the world to come under the name of Paradise; but, placing all the happiness which is there to be expected only in sensual pleasures and delights, they thereby make no real happiness at all, as being no greater than what brute beasts may partake of as well as we. The Jews, indeed, had some intimations of an eternal happiness as the consequent of true holiness in this life; but it was represented to them for the most part in such obscure types, and intermingled with so many temporal promises, that they generally had but very dark and doubtful apprehensions of it; insomuch that many of them, to wit, the Sadducees, utterly denied both the existence of

spirits and the resurrection of the dead, and, by consequence, the existence of the soul too in the other world, and the resurrection of the body to eternal life. But now, “by the Gospel,” as the apostle saith, “our Saviour Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light ³,” that is, he hath now given us in the Gospel such clear and infallible assurances of an eternal life and happiness attending those who repent and believe his Gospel, that none can believe the Gospel, and yet deny that which is so plainly asserted in it. And if we seriously consider the nature and excellency of that happiness which the Gospel assures us God will graciously bestow upon them that love and obey him, we must needs acknowledge it to be the highest encouragement imaginable to all manner of virtue and good works: for certainly that happiness which the Gospel proposeth to them that obey it, is the highest that is possible for a creature to be made capable of; so great, that I am altogether as unable to express, as I am desirous to enjoy it, as consisting in nothing less than in the clear vision and perfect fruition of the infinite God, the chiefest good himself: the consideration whereof should make us all, methinks, throw away the thoughts of all things else, and trouble ourselves about nothing but how to get to heaven, and, by consequence, how to walk in that narrow path which leads unto it, and never think we can do enough for that, which is not only infinitely more than we can deserve, but, infinitely greater, too, than we are able to conceive. It is an astonishing mercy, that the most high God should ever accept, by any means, of what we poor sinful mortals do; but that he should recompence our transient, weak, and faint performances with nothing less than a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,—this is such an inducement and encouragement to universal obedience, that we may justly suspect ourselves to be distracted in our minds, as well as corrupt in our affections, unless it prevail

upon us to devote ourselves wholly unto the service of the living God, and to the obedience of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; as knowing that, unless we do it, we shall not only be deprived of this transcendent happiness, but condemned, too, to the greatest misery that our natures can possibly be capable of; whereas, on the other side, if we do it, we shall as certainly not only be freed from that transcendent misery, but be instated also in the greatest happiness that our souls can possibly be invested with. And, therefore, I may conclude this with the words of the apostle, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord ⁴."

Thus I have shewn now what reasons you and I, who profess ourselves to be Christians, have to be eminent for good works, so as to excel all of other religions in true piety and virtue; in that we have clearer discoveries of God's will and our own duty, a more perfect example and pattern how to do it, promises of greater assistance from God himself to do it, and stronger assurances not only of acceptance of what we do in this life, but likewise of an eternal recompence of reward in the life to come. And need I now use any more arguments to persuade you to endeavour at least to be eminent in all true grace and virtue? Will it not be superfluous after so many reasons as have been produced for it? Verily, one would think it would be so; and I desire to hope the best of you all, and that you will not content yourselves with the bare profession of that excellent and only true religion which you are of, nor yet with the practice of some few particular duties required in it; but that you will now use the utmost of your power and skill to be such as your religion commands you should be, even far exceeding men of other persuasions; that every one may see what religion you are of, by your being and living better

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

than other men. And O that this might be the happy issue of this discourse, and of your coming hither at this time; even that from this day forward you would all strive and contend about nothing else but which should live the most like Christians, and which should most excel others in an universal obedience both to the law and gospel; that all here present might for the future shine as so many lights in the world! And let me tell you, this would be the way to shame both Jews and infidels into the embracement of the Christian religion. This would be the way, too, to convince papists, heretics, and schismatics, of their errors, when they shall see you that are sound in the faith outstripping and excelling them in your lives and conversation. All the arguments in the world would not prevail so much upon them as this one: and, therefore, if you have any love either for your religion or your own souls, halt no longer between two opinions; but if you be Christians, manifest yourselves to be so by your eminency in good works, excelling all others in your love to God's person, in your obedience to his precepts, in your fear of his threatenings, in your trusting on his promises, in your faith in his Son, in your loyalty to your sovereign, in your patience under your sufferings, in your contempt of the world, in your faithfulness to your friends, in your love to your enemies, in your constancy in praying, in your seriousness in hearing, in your frequenting the Sacrament, in your justice in your dealings, in your charity to the poor, in your lowliness in your own eyes, and in all other whether Christian graces or moral virtues whatsoever: for this is that which Christ expects and commands from you all, saying, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

SERMON XXIII.

THE WISDOM OF BEING HOLY.

PSALM cxi. 10.

“A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.”

As none can know God and not fear him, so neither can any one fear God aright, but he must needs endeavour at least sincerely to obey him; for he whose heart is possessed with such a sense of God's greatness, power, and glory, as makes him stand in awe and fear of him, will not dare to do any thing wilfully which he knows will offend him, nor yet to omit any thing which he thinks will be pleasing and acceptable unto him. Hence the fear of the Lord in Scripture is usually put for the whole duty of man, for holiness or piety in general, or for the conformity of our wills and actions unto the laws and commands of God; because it is impossible that any one should fear God, and yet not serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.

In this sense, therefore, it is, that the fear of the Lord is to be understood in this place, where the Psalmist saith, that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;” that is, a total submission of our wills to God's, and a sincere endeavour to please and obey him in all things, is the beginning of wisdom: so that a man doth not so much as begin to be wise, and, by consequence, is a very fool, until his mind be so

enlightened, his will rectified, and his whole man so sanctified throughout, that he devotes himself wholly to the service and honour of Almighty God; for till then he remains a mere natural, no better than he came into the world, if not much worse, strangely distempered in his brain, distracted in his mind, and corrupt in all the faculties of his soul, and, therefore, he cannot but be very disorderly in his life and conversation. And hence it is that sinful men, that is, men still in their natural and sinful estate, are guilty of so many egregious follies as commonly they are, not knowing to do any thing aright but sin; losing heaven to gain earth, and selling their souls to gratify their senses; admiring nothing so much as gilded dirt, and preferring it before the chiefest good; gaping after popular air, and choosing it rather than eternal glory; kicking against the pricks, and rebelling against Majesty and Omnipotence itself; standing continually upon the very brink of the bottomless pit, and yet thinking themselves secure; and yet, for all this, conceiting themselves to be wise and prudent, noble and gallant persons, as natural fools and madmen usually do; which, together with many such like ridiculous and foolish acts, so frequently committed by the sons of men, are both the clear symptoms, and ordinary products, of distempered brains: and, therefore, it is no wonder that they are so common amongst us, most men being still beside themselves, yea, all who do not truly fear God; for all such have not yet attained to the first beginning, not to the lowest degree, of wisdom, and so still remain in their natural folly and distraction, as the Psalmist here signifies to us, saying, that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

But now, when a man returns to God, then he begins to come to himself, so as to become a wise, prudent, and understanding person; yea, a man of good understanding, as is here in the next place suggested to us: “A good understanding,” saith he, “have all they that do his commandments.”

For the opening of which words we must, first, consider what is here meant by “a good understanding:” for which we must know that every man naturally hath an understanding, without which he could not be a man: for the understanding is the seat and fountain of all that reason and knowledge whereby men are distinguished from brute beasts; this being that faculty of the soul whereby alone we excel mere sensitive creatures, by being capable of apprehending and discerning betwixt truth and falsehood, good and evil, which other creatures cannot do. But now by nature every man’s understanding is very bad and corrupt, that being as much depraved in its apprehensions, as the will is in its affections; so that it ordinarily mistaketh truth for falsehood, and falsehood for truth; good for evil, and evil for good; by which means it comes to pass, that men may be very subtle and cunning, and yet not wise and prudent; or, as the prophet saith, “They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge¹.” And I fear there are many such amongst ourselves, who are very cunning and ingenious at driving on a bargain, very witty and jocular at censuring and backbiting others, very nimble and ready at over-reaching their neighbour, that can commit any sin as dexterously and artificially as if they had been bred up to it all their lifetime, as really they were; whereas, set them about any thing that is truly good,—as to repent of their sins, meditate upon God, examine their own hearts, or the like; and they know no more how to do it, than as if they had never heard of any such thing before; which plainly shews that, though they have an understanding, it is but a very bad one: in contradistinction to which bad understanding which they have that do not fear God, the Psalmist here saith, “There is a good understanding in them that do his commandments.” They have not only an understanding as well as others, but it is a good one; good, not so much in respect of the act, as

¹ Jer. iv. 22.

object. Others may have a quicker understanding than they; but their's is far better than others', because it is placed upon better objects, and so serves them to better purpose than the others' do: so that by it they are able to distinguish aright between good and evil, so as to apprehend God as truly good, and evil as truly evil; which others cannot, and, therefore, have that woe denounced against them². Hence, therefore, it is, that whatsoever understandings other persons may have; how great and large soever they may be; howsoever wise, discreet, and learned, they may seem in their own or others' eyes, so long as they do not fear God and keep his commandments, they are no better than fools and madmen in God's esteem. Whereas such as are truly pious and devout, however ignorant and simple they may appear to men, though they have not so much wit to get great estates, and manage worldly businesses with that cunning and dexterity as others do; if they have but wisdom enough to serve and obey God, they are truly wise and prudent persons. Others may have greater understanding, but far worse than theirs; they may have less, but better than others; for howsoever little it is, be sure it is good. "A good understanding have all they that do his commandments:" "that do his commandments;" in the Hebrew it is לְכָל עֹשֵׂיהֶם, "to all that do them;" and expositors something differ in assigning the antecedent to the pronoun "them." The Syriac Translation makes "the fear of God" to be the antecedent, rendering the words thus: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, a good understanding to him that doth it," that is, "that feareth the Lord." The Arabic makes "the wisdom of God" the antecedent: "A good understanding have all they that act by it;" that is, by that wisdom which is the fear of the Lord. So the LXX. Σύνεσις ἀγαθὴ πᾶσι τοῖς ποιῶσιν αὐτήν, "A good understanding have all they that act it;" that is, the wisdom before spoken of; upon which St. Chrysostom saith,

² Isa. v. 20.

τοῖς ποιοῦσιν αὐτήν, τουτέστι, τοῖς ποιοῦσι τὴν σοφίαν, καὶ διὰ τῶν ἔργων ἐπιδεικνυμένοις, “to such as do it;” that is, “to such as act that wisdom, and manifest it by their works.” But, if I had a mind to play the critic, I might easily shew how the Hebrew pronoun, being in the plural number, cannot so properly be referred to any one, as to both those antecedents, even to “the fear of the Lord,” and “wisdom” too; that the sense should be, “A good understanding have all they that are so wise as to fear the Lord.” But which way soever we take them, they will all amount to one and the same thing, and centre in that exposition which our Translation gives of them, even, “That they only have a good understanding that keep God’s commandments.” For as he is no wise man that doth not fear God; so neither can he be said to fear God, that doth not keep his commandments; fearing God, and keeping his commandments, being indeed equivalent and convertible terms: for that man in vain pretends to fear God, that doth not obey his commandments; where by “his commandments” we are to understand whatsoever the most high God hath enjoined us to do, either in his law or gospel, whether it concerns his glory immediately, or else our neighbour’s good. And whereas it is said, “his commandments,” we are to understand it indefinitely, of one as well as other, and so of all his commandments.

The words being thus explained, present us with this plain but great truth, asserted not only by the Psalmist, but God himself,—that every one that truly fears God and keeps his commandments is a wise man,—a man of a good understanding; though not, perhaps, in the esteem of silly mortals upon earth, yet in the judgment of the God of heaven, the supreme Being, the sovereign Monarch of the whole world, who doth not only assert it in my text, but elsewhere, saying, “He that keepeth the law is a wise son³,” not he that knoweth, but he that keepeth the law is wise. So

³ Prov. xxviii. 7.

that one man may know more than another, and yet the other be a wiser man than he; for wisdom doth not consist so much in knowledge, as in action. A man that knows much may be a fool, and he that knows but little may be a wise man; for he that knows much and doth little, his knowledge will do him more hurt than good; and, therefore, for all his knowledge, he is but a fool; yea, the more he knows, the more fool he is; because he knows what to do that he may be happy, but will not do it; he knows how to escape danger, but yet will run into it: which is certainly the highest piece of folly in the world. Whereas, on the other side, though a man knows but little, and yet does what he knows, his little knowledge will do him much good, as the other's great knowledge doth him but little good. And this, as St. Chrysostom observes, is the wisdom spoken of in my text, σοφίαν δὲ οὐ τὴν ἐν ῥήμασιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐν πράγμασι λέγει, "He speaks not," saith he, "of wisdom in words, but of wisdom in works;" not of that wisdom whereby a man knows what to do, but of that whereby a man doth what he knows. That is true wisdom indeed; and whatsoever comes short of that, deserves not the glorious name and title of wisdom; in which sense nothing can be more certain, than that he is the only wise man, or hath a good understanding, that keepeth the commandments of God.

But wisdom being a thing which most pretend to, and all desire, a right understanding and thorough conviction of this great truth cannot but be very prevalent with you to use the utmost of your endeavour to walk in all the commandments of God blameless; and, seeing it is your only wisdom so to do, I shall further explain and confirm it unto you, by shewing the ὅτι, that it is so, That he that fears God and keeps his commandments is really a wise man; and then the διότι, or How it comes to be so: and then instance in some particular acts wherein the wisdom of those that are truly pious discovers itself, and manifests to the world that they are the only wise men in it.

As for the first: To prove that the truly pious are the only wise men, or that they have a good understanding, indeed, that keep God's commandments, these arguments may be sufficient:

1. He that fears God and keeps his commandments must needs be a very wise man, a man of a good understanding; for, otherwise, as he would not fear God, so he could not keep his commandments. For he, that doth not know God, be sure, will never fear him. And, therefore, he that fears him, must needs know him. And to know God is certainly the greatest piece of knowledge and wisdom that we can attain unto; as ignorance of him is the greatest folly that we can be guilty of. And, further, as a man will not fear God, so he cannot keep his commandments, unless he hath a good understanding; there being a great deal of wisdom, discretion, and understanding, required to the adjusting of our actions aright to the commands of God. And, therefore, it must needs follow that he is a wise man that keeps God's commandments; because, unless he was so he could not do so, he could not lead so good a life, unless he had first a good understanding. But if a man truly fears and obeys God, we cannot question but his understanding is very good, in that he understands what is truly good, and inclines his will also unto the embracement and prosecution of it; which I look upon as the best, and, indeed, the only sign of a good understanding. For though a man hath never such high notions and speculations concerning good and evil, if his understanding of it doth not influence and sway his will, so as to choose what he knows to be good, and to avoid what he knows to be evil, such a man, at the best, is but a knowing fool, or a foolish knowing man; because, though he hath the knowledge of these things, it doth him no good at all. But if a man gives up himself wholly to walk according to the dictates of his reason, and, by consequence, according to the commands of God, it is plain that such a man's understanding rules and governs his will and actions, so that he doth not live as

brutes and fools do, according as his lust and sensual appetite draw him, but as his reason and discretion dictate to him. And, therefore, we cannot but conclude him to be a very wise man, indeed a man of a good understanding, in that it is such an understanding as makes him a good man.

2. You will all acknowledge that it is a great part of a wise man to do the business he sets about, and to attend the end he aims at. He is a fool that never doth what he intends, nor accomplisheth what he desires. But when a man so behaveth himself, and manageth his affairs, that he perfects what he is sent about, and conquers whatsoever he undertakes, he, you will all say, is a truly wise and prudent man. And such a one is every pious man, that fears God, and keeps his commandments; for he minds and doth the business that he came into the world about. For the great errand we were sent for, the only work we have here to do, is to glorify God by observing and obeying his commands; by which also we attain to what we desire. For happiness is the only thing that all men naturally desire, though some seek it in one thing, some in another: but all miss of it, but only such as fear and obey God; for all the happiness that we are capable of consists only in his love and favour; which it is impossible for us to gain, unless we obey and please him; or to miss of, if we sincerely endeavour to do so. Indeed, there is unspeakable happiness in obedience itself, as the Psalmist tells us⁴. But the happiness which we shall have hereafter, if we obey God here, far exceeds our very thoughts as well as words⁵. But as this is the only happiness that we can be invested with, so there is no way of attaining to it but only by holiness⁶. And, therefore, as they cannot but be looked upon as the worst of fools and madmen, that prefer their sins before such transcendent happiness as this is, so they who fear God, and obey his commandments, and, by that means, in and through

⁴ Ps. xix. 11.⁵ 1 Cor. ii. 9.⁶ Heb. xii. 14.

Christ, attain to this, not only the highest, but the only happiness that can possibly be made partakers of; such, I say, must needs be acknowledged to be men of great wisdom, and a good understanding indeed.

3. True wisdom discovereth itself very much in foreseeing and preventing dangers. He is a fool, with a witness, that sees misery and ruin hanging over his head, and will not endeavour to avoid it: yet such is the folly of every sinner, that he is secure and careless of himself, though he stands continually upon the brink of destruction. But he that truly fears God, and doth what he commands him, thereby prevents all the evils which foolish sinners run themselves into; he thereby avoids the wrath and displeasure of Almighty God, "who is angry with the wicked every day⁷," and so his fury and indignation is ready every moment to be poured forth upon them. And, certainly, as God's love and favour is the greatest good, so is his anger the greatest evil of punishment, in the world; yea, there is nothing of real evil or misery, but so far as it proceeds from the wrath of God. Crosses, reproaches, afflictions, sickness, death, these are no farther evil, than as they have a mixture of divine wrath in them; insomuch that as the greatest temporal misery with the love of God is a real blessing, so the greatest temporal blessing in the world with his wrath and indignation is a real curse. But now this source of all miseries, this evil of all evils, such as keep God's commandments do most certainly prevent: for as there are none but sinners that God is angry with, so there is nothing but sin that he is angry for. And as they that thus sincerely obey God avoid his wrath; so they do likewise prevent the gnawings and torments of a guilty conscience, arising only from the apprehension of God's wrath enkindled against us for our sins committed against him. For this is the portion only of their cup that offend God. For as they abuse his mercies against him, he arms their consciences against them; which

⁷ Ps. vii. 11.

accusing them of their folly and wickedness, their punishment for sin, even in this life, far exceeds their pleasure in it. But now they who are truly godly are so wise as to prevent all this misery by keeping their "consciences void of offence toward God, and toward men⁸." Yea, by this means also, they prevent eternal misery and confusion in the world to come,—hell-fire, I mean, which is nothing else but the conjunction and perfection of the two insupportable evils before spoken of, as our Saviour himself intimates⁹. When the soul shall perfectly apprehend the eternal God as frowning upon it, and be as perfectly convinced of the sins which it hath foolishly committed against so glorious and dreadful a Being, it is impossible to express what racks and tortures it will then be put upon. But, howsoever great these miseries are, such as truly fear and serve God will never feel them, they being allotted only for them that do not so¹. And, therefore, we cannot but acknowledge such to be the only wise men in the world.

4. You may know a wise man also by his forecasting for the future, and seriously considering beforehand how to live, and be happy hereafter. It is the part of a fool, a brute, to look only to the present time; a wise man will provide for the time to come. "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son²." It is the part of a wise man to lay up in summer against winter, in a calm against a storm, in health against sickness, in life against death, much more in time against eternity. Thus wise are they, and they only, that fear God and keep his commandments; for whilst others throw away their time upon the impertinencies of this present world, they provide for the world to come "by laying up for themselves treasures in heaven³."

5. The principal thing whereby to know a wise man from a fool is his choice: when of two evils he chooseth

⁸ Acts xxiv. 16.

⁹ Mark ix. 44.

¹ Matt. xxv. 46.

² Prov. x. 5.

³ Matt. vi. 20.

the least, and of two goods the best; this must needs argue a good understanding, able to discern betwixt good and evil, as also betwixt the greater and the lesser good. A sinner is such a fool, that he counts good evil, and evil good; puts light for darkness, and darkness for light. But he that fears God is so wise, as always to choose the better part⁴. He chooseth heaven before earth, holiness before sin, the love and favour of God before all things in the world besides: and so he chooseth the more noble, the more pleasant, the more profitable, the more honest, the more necessary, the more lasting, and, by consequence, the better part of the two; yea, the best of all. As Moses did to the children of Israel⁵, so doth God set before you all life and death, happiness and misery: life and happiness, if you obey his commands; death and misery, if you do not. Now such as keep his commandments are so wise as to choose the life and happiness for themselves, and leave death and misery for such fools as all sinners are, to undergo. And, therefore, all things considered, all that have any understanding among you must needs grant that they only have a good understanding that fear and obey God.

The next question to be resolved, is, How it comes to pass that they that fear God and keep his commandments, so far excel others in true wisdom, and a good understanding?

The reasons are,

1. Because such as truly fear God are come to themselves again; they are recovered from their former madness and distraction to the right use of their senses and reason, which sinners are not. So long as a man remains in his natural condition, or until he return to God, his fancy is so disturbed, his mind so distracted, and all his intellectuals so strangely broken and out of order, that every thing is represented to him to be of a quite different nature from what it is in itself. He can see nothing of good in God himself, nothing of sinful-

⁴ Luke x. 42.

⁵ Deut. xxx. 19.

ness in sin : yea, he ofttimes fancies to himself a great deal of good in evil, and of evil in good ; happiness in sin, and misery in holiness. Hence the apostle saith, that “ the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him ⁶.” That is, he is so far from looking upon the wisdom of God as wisdom, that he reckons it to be but foolishness ; so far from reckoning the foolishness of sin to be foolishness, that he looks upon it as wisdom ; so far from thinking good to be good, and evil, evil, that he judges good to be evil, and evil good. And, therefore, it is no wonder if he be a fool, seeing he looks upon it as his wisdom to be so ; no wonder if he be so bad, seeing he reckons it his goodness to be so. But now, when God intends to work over a soul unto him, he dispels these dark shades of ignorance and error from off the face of the soul, and clears up its understanding, shewing it the goodness of God, and the sinfulness of sin : so that the soul is now able to discern betwixt the one and the other. Yea, this is the first act which God passeth upon the soul, in order to its conversion, whereby it is so enlightened, that it soon discovers its former folly and madness, and so it begins to come to itself again, and is able to consider and weigh things in the balance of right reason. And the mind being thus recovered from its former distemper, it is now able to pass a sound judgment upon every thing that is presented to it ; so that now it apprehends God as an all-glorious, incomprehensible, and almighty Being, and, therefore, it cannot but fear and dread him : it apprehends the commandments of God to be infinitely just and righteous, and, therefore, it cannot but endeavour at least sincerely to observe and keep them. And the mind of such as do so, being thus composed and restored to its proper frame and constitution, they cannot but have a right and good understanding, and so become really and truly wise.

2. As by our returning unto God, and so coming to

⁶ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

ourselves, we are made so wise as to be both able and willing to keep the commandments of God; so by our keeping the commandments, we every day may more and more increase our wisdom, and better our understanding; not only because the more we accustom ourselves to regulate our actions according to the laws of God, the better we shall be instructed and enabled to do that wherein our principal wisdom doth consist; but especially because, if we faithfully and constantly endeavour to fear and obey God in what he commands, he will teach us wisdom, and make known himself and his laws more and more unto us, and so clear up and better our understandings in what is necessary for us to know and do. "I understand more than the ancients," saith David, "because I keep thy commandments⁷." And, "thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies⁸." So that God by his commandments doth teach men wisdom, and makes them that keep them wiser than other people. Yea, the commandments themselves, by the grace of God, help towards the refining of our knowledge, and the bettering our understandings. "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes⁹." So that although a man be not of that quick understanding as some are in the laws of God, if he doth but sincerely endeavour to keep them as well as he can, God will enable him to know better what to do, as well as to do that better which he knows. To this purpose is that gracious promise of our blessed Saviour: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him¹;" that is, he that loveth me so as to keep my commandments, I will so love him as to manifest myself

⁷ Ps. cxix. 100.

⁹ Ib. xix. 7, 8.

⁸ Ver. 98.

¹ John xiv. 21.

unto him, acquaint him with my will and pleasure, and so make him wise unto salvation, directing him in the way that leadeth to everlasting life. And, therefore, it is no wonder that he that keepeth the commandments is wise, seeing Wisdom itself hath promised to make him so, by unveiling and manifesting itself unto him. This, therefore, is the great and principal reason why they that fear God are so wise, and so far exceed all others in prudence and understanding;—even because they are instructed by God and Christ himself, who is the fountain and source from whence all true wisdom and good understanding flow.

And that you may the better understand how wise all those are who are truly holy, who fear and obey God, I shall, in the last place, instance in some of those acts, wherein they shew forth that wisdom which they have received from above, and manifest to the world that they are the only men of a good understanding who keep the commandments of God. Indeed, there is nothing which God hath commanded, but it is our wisdom to perform it; as considering that obedience to the laws that he hath enjoined us is indispensably necessary to the obtaining of the happiness which he hath promised us. Howsoever, that you may pass the better judgment upon all the rest, I shall instance only in some of those particular graces and virtues which it is our wisdom to act, and exercise ourselves continually in, that you may all be convinced that it is your wisdom, as well as duty, to fear God and keep his commands.

First, therefore, as it is God's most gracious command, so it is our great wisdom, to repent, that is, to be thoroughly humbled for, resolved against, and converted from, those sins which we have heretofore allowed and indulged ourselves in. For seeing sin is the only cause of evil, if it be our wisdom to repent of evil, it must needs be our wisdom to repent of sin; repenting of sin being the only way whereby it is possible for us to avoid the evil and punishments which

are due unto it. "The heart of the wise," saith Solomon, "is in the house of mourning²." It is the trick of a fool to take pleasure in sin: but it is the part of a wise man to be sorry for it; yea, so to be sorry for it, as sincerely and constantly to endeavour to forsake and leave it. For tell me, Is it not your wisdom to agree with your adversary in the way? Is it not your wisdom to get God reconciled to you, and yourselves reconciled to him? Is it not your wisdom to get out of the road to hell, and to turn into the narrow path that leads to heaven? Is it not your wisdom to refuse the evil, and choose the good; to avoid the misery, and embrace the happiness, which is set before you? If you have but so much wit as to know what it is to be wise, you cannot but acknowledge those to be great acts of wisdom. And yet there is never a one of them can possibly be done without repentance; it being absolutely impossible either to please God here, or enjoy him hereafter, to escape hell torments, or attain to the joys of heaven, without repentance. And, therefore, let the vain and foolish world say what it will, the truly humble and penitent is the only wise and prudent man.

2. To believe in Jesus Christ, so as to trust and depend upon him, and him alone, for pardon, acceptance, and salvation;—this is so great an act of wisdom, that we can do nothing wisely without it: for we can have no wisdom but what we receive from Christ; neither can we receive any from him, but by believing in him; who is therefore said to be made our wisdom, as well as our righteousness³, because we are made wise by him, as well as accepted of as righteous in him. Hence, when the Galatians began to stagger and err from the faith of Christ, thinking to be justified by the works of the law, St. Paul calls them fools and madmen for their pains. "O foolish Galatians," saith he, "who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evi-

² Eccles. vii. 4.

³ 1 Cor. i. 30.

dently set forth crucified among you⁴?" "Who hath bewitched you?" Implying that they which think to be justified or saved by their own obedience and good works, are certainly bewitched and seduced by some lying spirit or other; for no man in his right wits can possibly think that his future obedience can satisfy for his former sins, and that a few weak performances upon earth could merit eternal glory. These are fond conceits, and such as no sober and prudent person will be ever persuaded to entertain; especially, considering that we have now a certain and infallible way found out, whereby never a soul of us but may attain to the pardon of our sins, and the eternal salvation of our immortal souls,—and that is by faith in Jesus Christ, "who is able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by him⁵." And tell me, seeing there is but one way whereby you can go to God and be saved, is it not your wisdom to walk in it? Seeing there is but one Redeemer of mankind that can deliver you from sin and hell, is it not your wisdom to haste to him? Seeing there is but one city of refuge in all the world, which can defend you from the pursuit of divine wrath, is it not your wisdom to haste thither? Seeing there is but one Physician that can cure you of your spiritual distempers, is it not your wisdom to go to him? Seeing there is but one Advocate in the court of heaven that can plead your cause at the throne of grace, is it not your wisdom to retain him? Seeing there is but one sure Rock in all the world, that can keep you from sinking into the bottomless ocean, the abyss, of misery, is it not your wisdom to anchor your hope on him? In a word, "seeing there is no name given under heaven whereby you can be saved, but the name of Christ⁶," and yet, seeing there is no way neither of being saved by him, but by believing in him, is it not, then, your wisdom to lay hold upon him, to believe in him, and obey his Gospel? What is, if this be not wisdom?

⁴ Gal. ii. 21; iii. 1, 2.⁵ Heb. vii. 25.⁶ Acts iv. 12.

3. Humility also is another especial instance of true wisdom; when a man is low and humble in his own esteem, how high soever he be in others. For this argues that a man hath a good understanding, he is acquainted with his own heart, he knows how vile and sinful he is, and, therefore, cannot but be humble in his own sight. And questionless, it is as great a piece of wisdom to be humble, as it is a folly to be proud and haughty. If I see a man proud, I am presently apt to suspect him to be a fool, one that doth not know himself, that knows not how much sin, venom, and corruption, is within him: for if he saw it, he could not but abhor himself, and be humbled under it. An heathen poet, Persius by name, could say, *Tecum habita, et nosces quam sit tibi curta supellex*: "Live at home, live with thyself, look into thy own heart, and thou shalt soon see how little thou hast to be proud of;" or rather, how much thou hast to be humbled for. For what hast thou to be proud of? Art thou proud of thy wisdom? If thou hast any, thou couldst not be proud: "Seest thou a man wise in his own eyes?" saith Solomon; "there is more hope of a fool than of him⁷." So that he that thinks himself wise, is a fool; yea, he is therefore a fool, because he thinks himself wise. Art thou proud of the strength of thy body, or the greatness of thy estate? Thus saith Wisdom itself, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the strong man glory in his strength, let not the rich man glory in his riches⁸." And verily a horse hath as much cause to be proud of his trappings or burden, as any man hath to be proud of any thing he hath or can have here below. And, therefore, whatsoever our outward condition be, how great soever our gifts and parts, yea, how strong soever our graces and virtues are, it is still our wisdom to be humble in our own eyes, and to live as those who believe that great truth,—that we can never think too highly of God, nor too lowly of ourselves.

⁷ Prov. xxvi. 12.

⁸ Jer. ix. 23.

4. Another great piece of wisdom, whereby they that truly fear God manifest themselves to have a good understanding indeed, is charity, or a free and liberal distribution of what we have ourselves to such as want it. For this is the way "to make unto ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness⁹." This is the way to enrich ourselves by relieving others. Neither is there any other way in the world to be rich, and to improve our estates but this. For what we have is not our own, but only God lends it to us to lay out for him; but what we give is our own, for we lend it to God to lay it up for us: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again¹." So that what I have is God's; but what I give is mine own. For I have lent it to God, and have his word for it that he will pay it to me again; which is infinitely surer than all the bonds in the world. And so when God lends an estate to us, we are his debtors for it; but when we give any thing to the poor, God acknowledgeth himself our debtor for that. And, therefore, what we keep we cannot call ours, because we owe it unto God; but what we give, we may call our own; because God owes it to us, having bound himself by his promise that he will pay us it again. To this purpose I have met with an excellent passage in St. Chrysostom: "Why therefore," saith he, "dost thou deprive thyself of those things which God would have thee to possess; for he hath therefore commanded thee to give to another, that thou thyself mightest have it," *ἕως γὰρ μόνος κατέχεις οὐδὲ αὐτὸς ἔχεις, ὅταν δὲ ἐτέρῳ δῶς τότε καὶ αὐτὸς ἔλαβες*, "so long as thyself keepest it, not so much as thyself hath it; but when thou givest it to another, then thou receivest it to thyself." So that what we keep, that we want; what we give, that we have; for at the same time that we give it to another, we receive it ourselves. And this is laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven, by laying out for

⁹ Luke xvi. 9.¹ Prov. xix. 17.

God the treasures that we have upon earth; which being the only good use that we can possibly make of what we have, it must needs be acknowledged a great piece of wisdom thus to employ what God hath entrusted with us to our own advantage.

5. The wisdom of those who are truly righteous appears also in the resignation of their wills to God's. As we see Wisdom itself did, in our blessed Saviour, who could say, "Not my will, but thine be done." And verily, thus to resign our wills to God's so as to have no wills, as it were, of our own, but to submit ourselves wholly to be guided by the will of God, is as high an act of wisdom as it is possible for us to exert; for by this means we may always have our wills, because they are the same with God's, which is always done. Nay, when we have thus given our wills to God's, so as to entrust him always to will for us; all providences whatsoever are, in effect, by the acts of our own wills, with this extraordinary advantage, that they are guided and directed by the infinite wisdom and goodness of God. And as it is the wisdom of a patient to let the physician choose what diet, physic, and the like, he must have, so it is much more our wisdom thus to entrust God to choose for us, and to be well pleased with his choice, though never so cross to our sinful desires; because we cannot but acknowledge that he knows infinitely better than ourselves what is good or hurtful for us; especially considering also, that by this means we may make a virtue of necessity. For God's will, be sure, must be done, whether we will or no; and, therefore, it is madness in us to resist or gainsay it, and our greatest wisdom wholly to submit ourselves unto it, and always to acquiesce contented in it.

Thus I might shew in all other acts of true piety whatsoever, that it is our wisdom to perform them; and that the truly pious manifest themselves to be the only wise men, by every act of obedience which they perform to the commandments of God. For what? Doth wisdom teach you to live happily in the world?

Then the godly are the only wise men yet; who often retire from the vexatious bustles and tumults of this distracting world, that they may fix and unite their hearts to draw nigh to God, and enjoy communion with the chiefest Good, the Fountain of all true happiness. Doth wisdom teach you to prefer the good before the evil? Then they that fear God are wise in choosing the greatest suffering rather than the least sin; there being more real evil in the least sin than in the greatest suffering imaginable. Doth wisdom teach you to consult your books to see what others owe to you, and you to others, that you may know your outward estate and condition? How much wiser are the godly, who oft examine themselves, and consider how the case stands betwixt God and their souls? Is it your wisdom to have a care of yourselves, and not to run headlong into ruin and perdition? Then there is none so wise as the godly, who are always watchful over themselves, and careful to avoid sin, the only cause of all their misery. Is it your wisdom to do that well which you can do but once, and which can never be mended if it be once ill done? Then certainly they that truly fear God must carry away the palm for wisdom from all the world besides; for they are always ready to die, and so to do that well which they can never do again. They were the foolish virgins which wanted it; the wise had oil in their lamps, true grace in their hearts, and so were ready when the bridegroom came; and therefore they entered into the bride chamber, when the others were shut out, and with all their importunities could never after be admitted to come in.

But what need I instance in any more particulars? These may be sufficient to demonstrate that the fear of the Lord, or true holiness, is the **ראשית**, both “the beginning” and “the end” of true wisdom; having proved unto you that sinners so long as such are mere fools, not having attained so far as to the first beginning of wisdom; and that saints, so far as such, are truly wise. All which I have endeavoured to explain with that clearness and perspicuity, that none of you that have

any understanding at all but must needs confess that they only have a good understanding that fear God and keep his commandments. And, therefore, I hope you have all prevented me in what I intended for the application of this truth; which was to advise and stir you up to do that which you cannot but be now convinced is not only your duty and interest, but your wisdom too to do;—even to devote yourselves for the future wholly to the service of Almighty God, to fear, honour, and obey him: for I cannot persuade myself but you all desire to act like wise men. This I am sure of, you all either are, or would be accounted, wise. But assure yourselves, whatsoever your condition be in this world, howsoever cunning and subtle you may be in the management of worldly affairs, whatsoever conceits you may have of yourselves, whatsoever opinion others may entertain of you, yet in the judgment of wise men, and of the all-wise God himself, you neither are nor can be truly wise until you be truly good. And, therefore, if any of you desire, as I hope you all do, to manifest yourselves to be sober and discreet, wise and prudent men and women, take this course to do it:—break off your former sins by repentance, and shewing mercy to the poor, and believe in Christ for pardon and salvation, love God's person and obey his precepts, trust on his promises, and fear his threatenings, sanctify his sabbaths, and reverence his name, be loyal to your sovereign, and obedient to magistrates, be faithful to your friends, and loving to your enemies, kind and charitable, just and equitable unto all: in a word, fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man², and his wisdom too.

² Eccles. xii. 13.

SERMON XXIV.

THE MEDITATION OF GOD'S LAW, THE GOOD MAN'S
DELIGHT.

PSALM i. 2.

“But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate (or exercise himself) day and night.”

IN the Old Testament we find, that in former ages, when people had occasion and desire to know the mind of God in any difficult and doubtful case, they went to the high priest, who asking counsel for them “after the judgment of Urim before the Lord¹,” the Lord was pleased to give them such responses, or answers, as clearly discovered his will in the case propounded; which were therefore called his oracles: or else, if God had raised up ever a prophet among them,—as he usually did in every age,—they would go and consult him, or “enquire of the Lord by him²,” and the prophet, by divine inspiration, would certainly tell them what the mind of the Lord was in the business they went about. Thus “God, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets³.” It was God who spake by the prophets; and therefore, whatsoever they said, as such, was likewise an oracle of God. And, therefore, St. Paul, speaking of the advantages which the Jews had above

¹ Numb. xxvii. 21.

² Jer. xxi. 2.

³ Heb. i. 1.

other people, reckons this as the chief, "because that unto them were committed the oracles of God ⁴."

We have no such kind of oracles to consult in these latter days, as they had: neither have we any occasion for them; for now that God hath spoken to us by his Son, and hath caused what he spake by him and his apostles, as well as what he had before spoken by the prophets, to be committed to writing, and faithfully brought down and delivered to us, we may there know the mind of God in every thing that is necessary for us to consult him about, as certainly as if we received it immediately from him by the mouth of a high priest, or a prophet. For all that Holy Scripture being given by inspiration of God, it is all but as one continued oracle of God, wherein he hath delivered and declared his divine will and pleasure in all things that are necessary for any man to know. And whatsoever is not there revealed, we may from thence conclude, that it is not necessary for us to know it; but, rather, that it is the divine will that we should not be inquisitive about it. But as whatsoever is there revealed, is therefore revealed that we might know it; so whatsoever we are really concerned to know, in order to our being happy, is there revealed, so as that we may know the mind of God himself concerning it.

As for example: it highly concerns all men to know wherein true happiness consisteth, or who may be truly said to be a blessed, or a happy man. This we can never know from men themselves; for they could never yet agree about it, some accounting one man happy, some another: and most esteem those only happy, who have most of the good things, as they are called, of this life; though they which have them find, by their own experience, that they are as far from being happy as they who have them not.

Wherefore our only way to be fully resolved in this case is, to consult the oracles of God who made us, and, therefore, best knows what will make us happy. But

⁴ Rom. iii. 3.

there we find that he never pronounceth any man happy for any outward enjoyments. He never saith, Blessed are the rich ; Blessed are they that are advanced to honour and authority over their fellow-creatures ; Blessed are they that fare deliciously every day ; Blessed are they that live in ease and plenty of all things they can desire in this world. There is nothing like this in all the Bible among the oracles of God, which are there recorded.

But what then saith the answer of God to this great question, Who is the blessed man ? That we have here delivered, not in ambiguous terms, like the heathen oracles, but in words so plain and easy, that any one that reads them may certainly understand the mind of God in them. For thus saith the Lord, "Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, and that hath not sat in the seat of the scornful : but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law will he exercise himself," or meditate, "day and night." Where we see the blessed man described, not by what he hath, or hath not, in this world ; but first, by what he doth not, and then by what he doth. He doth not follow the counsel of ungodly men, that would entice him from his obedience to the truth, and laws of God ; he doth what he can to keep out of the way that sinners walk in ; and if, through surprise or inadvertency, he happens to be got into it, yet howsoever he doth not stand, or continue, in it ; he never sits, or associates himself, with scorers,—such as make a mock at sin, deride religion, and scorn reproof. These are the obstinate sinners, upon whom the curse of God will certainly fall ; and, therefore, he, who is blessed of God, will avoid such company and acquaintance, as he would do those which he knows to be infected with the plague.

Neither doth he only avoid that which is evil, but he delights in that which is good : for "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he exercise himself day and night ;" which being the positive description made by God himself of a blessed man,

such as we all desire to be, it will be worth our while to treat more particularly of it, that we may fully understand his divine meaning in it. For which purpose we shall, by his assistance, consider both parts of it; how a man should delight in the law of God, and how he should exercise himself in that law day and night: and then it will be easy to shew, that he who doth so is certainly a blessed, a happy man.

First, therefore, by "the law," or, as the original word signifies, "the doctrine" of the Lord, we are here to understand all that the Lord, the Almighty Creator and Governor of all things, hath taught us in his Holy word. For although when this oracle was first committed to writing, there were none other extant but only the five books of Moses, and perhaps Joshua and Judges, yet they then contained the whole will of God; and all that were afterwards added by the prophets and apostles were only for the clearer explication of what was delivered before in them. And in every age, as God was pleased to make clearer and clearer revelations of himself and his holy will to mankind, the books wherein they were contained were still added to those before written, and reckoned part of his law: so that when the whole canon of the Scriptures was completed, as it hath been now for many years, it is all that law, or doctrine of the Lord, in which every wise and good man delights, and which he prefers before all the books that were ever written, and all things else that can be desired in this world; as David did, saying to God, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver⁵." "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth⁶!" "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart⁷." "Thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors⁸." And it is no wonder; for no man can look into the law of the Lord, or that system of divine revelations that

⁵ Ps. cxix. 72.

⁷ Ver. 111.

⁶ Ver. 103.

⁸ Ver. 24.

the Lord God Almighty hath given to the world, but he will every where find something or other that will afford extraordinary delight and pleasure to him. For, first, how are all men naturally delighted in knowledge, especially in the knowledge of great and necessary truths! This is such a pleasure to the minds of men, that he who doth but think that he hath found out something which he did not know before, his imagination is tickled and pleased with it; as they, who give themselves to the study of natural philosophy, find by their own experience: for if they happen to light upon what they imagine to be the cause of such an effect or phenomenon in nature, they find their minds strangely affected with it; though, after all, the series of secondary causes, and the dependence of one upon another, and all upon the First, is established and managed with such infinite wisdom and power, as far exceeds the reach of human understandings: so that “we hardly guess aright at things that are upon earth⁹,” and all our knowledge of them, at the best, is only opinion and conjecture. And yet this very conceit of our knowing them is a pleasure to us: how much more would it be so, if we were sure that our knowledge was right and perfect! But that we can never be of any knowledge but that which we receive from God himself. There is nothing in this world that we know so certainly, as that all our other knowledge is uncertain; for we have no other than what we receive from our senses or reason, or else from the testimony of other men. But we know, by our own experience, that all these ways are fallible; and, therefore, can never be certain that we know any thing aright by them. But we know that God is infallible; what he hath said cannot but be true, just as he said it: and, therefore, whatsoever we know upon his word, we are sure that we know it aright. And such knowledge must needs exceed all other in pleasure and satisfaction, as much as it doth in truth and certainty.

⁹ Wisd. ix. 16.

Neither is the knowledge which we are taught, and so learn of God, only certain, and the only certain knowledge that we have of any thing; but it is the knowledge of the greatest and most glorious things in the world, and such as are most necessary for all men to know.

For by the law, or word of God, we know God himself as far as finite creatures can know an infinite Being. By it we know that he is a Spirit, without body, parts, or passions; that he, simply, is Jehovah, being, or essence itself; that he is of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness; that the Father, Word, and Holy Ghost, these Three are One, all that one Being, Jehovah, the Lord; that he is every where, all the world over, the same, without any variableness, or shadow of change. This, and whatever else is either necessary or possible for us to know concerning God, is revealed to us by himself in his Holy word; and he that delights not in the law of God upon this account, because he may thereby know him, it is only because he hath not yet learned to know him by it: for if he had, he could not but find himself affected with it, more than with all the pleasures of the world besides; the knowledge of God being itself the greatest good and happiness that the soul is capable of, insomuch that eternal life itself consisteth in the perfection of it.

By the law of God we know also how the world was made, how it is still upheld in its being, and how all things in it come to be so wisely ordered as we see they are. By it we know how man was formed, how pure and perfect he was at first made, and how he fell into the wretched estate he is now in. By it we know likewise how God was pleased to set up another Adam, or man in general, even Jesus Christ, by whom mankind might be restored to the same estate from which they fell in the first: that he, "who knew no sin, was made sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him¹;" that "as by one man's disobe-

¹ 2 Cor. v. 21.

dience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous²." That "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive³." That he "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification⁴." That he is the only "mediator between God and men⁵;" and is therefore "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them⁶." These are glorious and comfortable truths indeed, which no man can hear of, and believe, but he must needs "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory⁷." And, therefore, whosoever is so wise as to mind his own good and welfare, cannot but take great delight in the law of the Lord, where these and many such great truths are revealed and attested by God himself. Moreover, such a one finds great delight in the word of God by reason of the laws, or statutes, which are there recorded; laws enacted by the supreme Lawgiver, the infinite, wise, and gracious Governor of the world: wherein he hath discovered his divine will and pleasure, how all mankind should demean themselves both towards him, and towards one another, while they are upon earth; and what they must do that they may obtain eternal life in heaven. All which statutes are so wisely composed and fitted to the nature of man, that, as David observed, "they rejoice the heart, they enlighten the eyes;" and are therefore "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb⁸."

Again, all men naturally delight in history; in reading what was done in former ages: and the older a history is, the more pleasure it commonly affords, provided it appear to be a true relation of what was done in the times it treats of. But the Holy Scripture exceeds all other histories in antiquity, as well as in fidelity and truth. Thucydides, one of the most ancient of all the

² Rom. v. 19.³ 1 Cor. xv. 22.⁴ Rom. iv. 25.⁵ 1 Tim. ii. 5.⁶ Heb. vii. 25.⁷ 1 Pet. i. 8.⁸ Ps. xix. 8—10.

ancient historians, acknowledgeth that he could find nothing clear in history before the Peloponnesian war, which happened about the time of Nehemiah: wherefore the last history (as that is) which we have in the Bible, is as old as the oldest that is extant any where else, to which any credit can be given; the profane beginning where the sacred ends: but here we have many things faithfully recorded, that were done one thousand, two thousand, three thousand years before that, yea, from the very creation of the world.

Besides that, the historical part of the Holy Scripture exceeds all other histories in the things which are there related. There we read of what Almighty God himself did, and what his holy angels did by his command. There we read what punishments he inflicted upon obstinate sinners, and what care he always took of those who served him faithfully. There we read how his faithful people carried themselves in all conditions, and what they did to approve themselves to him, and to keep in his love and favour. There we read how the Son of God came into the world, what miracles he wrought, how he died, and rose again, and went up to heaven: and all to perfect our redemption. There we have also his life described, the only life that ever man lived upon earth without sin, and so the only perfect exemplar and pattern of all true piety and virtue that was ever seen among men. And if all history be a pleasure, what a pleasure is such a history as this to any sober and considering man!

To all which we may add, that no man can have any solid peace, delight, or comfort, in his own mind, but what he draws from the law, or word, of God; forasmuch as it is there only that we find any firm ground whereupon to trust and hope for his grace and favour. For we, who are conscious to ourselves that we have so often offended the Almighty God, how can we expect any mercy at his hands! No way, certainly, unless we have his own word and promise for it. But we have no such promise from him but only in the Holy Scripture. But there he hath promised pardon, and grace,

and all good things that can be desired, to those who repent and believe the Gospel; and hath confirmed the same promises, as he made them, in Jesus Christ. And, therefore, all that are sensible of their sins, and desire mercy, cannot but take great delight in God's Holy word, wherein alone he hath been graciously pleased to promise it to them. From all which we may conclude with the apostle, that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope⁹."

Seeing, therefore, the law of God affords so great delight to those who are exercised therein, when once a man hath tasted of it, his own inclinations will lead him to exercise himself as often as he can in it. And, therefore, the Psalmist here makes this the other part of the character of a blessed man; for, having said that "his delight is in the law of the Lord;" he adds, "and in his law will he exercise himself day and night:" or, as the original word usually signifies, and is therefore rendered in our last Translation, he will "meditate" in it. But the sense is the same, for he exerciseth himself in it by meditating upon it; which he therefore doth not only now and then, by the by, but very frequently, or, as it is here expressed, "day and night." This the royal Prophet here asserts of every good man; and elsewhere confirms it by his own example and experience, saying, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day¹;" and, "Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might meditate in thy word²."

But here it will be necessary to inquire how every good man doth, and we ought to exercise ourselves by meditating in the word of God, so as that we may reap the benefit and enjoy the delights of it: for this is a greater art, and requires more study and application, than men are commonly aware of. But we may learn the whole mystery of it from our Church, which, in the Collect for the second Sunday in Advent, directs us to

⁹ Rom. xv. 4.

¹ Ps. cxix. 97.

² Ver. 148.

pray to God, 'who hath caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of his holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which he hath given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.' For what we here beseech Almighty God to give us grace to do, we must endeavour all we can ourselves to do it by the assistance of his said grace, which he hath promised to all those who ask it faithfully of him. And if we thus hear the Holy Scriptures, 'read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them,' we shall do all that is required to the exercising our thoughts and meditations upon them, so as to receive both profit and pleasure from them.

First, therefore, we must 'hear' the word of God; that is, we must hear it read, declared, or preached by a minister, or officer, sent from God himself to do it. That this is the proper meaning of hearing the word, appears from the word itself, where it is said, "How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent³?" From whence it is plain that, in the sense of Scripture, they only are truly said to hear the word, who hear it from such as are sent to preach it to them. If they be not sent by God, they cannot truly preach in his name; and then people may hear them as much as they please, it all signifies no more, than as if a nation, having some great affair to transact with a foreign prince, should choose one from among themselves to transact it with them, who having no commission from the said prince, as his ambassador to do it, whatsoever he doth is void, and of no effect. Yet this is the case of many in our age, wherein that Scripture is fulfilled which saith, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears⁴." And what little good people get by such teachers, which they

³ Rom. x. 14, 15.

⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 3.

heap to themselves, we are taught by the same Scripture, saying, "of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth⁵." They are ever hearing and hearing, as if they could never hear enough; and yet, after all, can never come to the true knowledge of God, because they hear such only as are of their own choosing, not such as God sends to them. Whereas they who attentively hearken to the word of God, as it is delivered and made known to them, by his own ambassadors, and accordingly receive it, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God himself; "it worketh effectually in them that believe⁶." This, therefore, is the first thing required to the exercising ourselves, and meditating aright, in the law of God,—even by hearing it repeated or explained to us by one of his own officers, sent by him to do it, and so receiving it as from himself.

And as all ought thus to hear the word of God; so they who can, ought to 'read' it too. I say—they who can; for in our age there are many who cannot read; and in former ages, especially the primitive, there were few who could: and yet by their bare hearing the word read, or repeated to them, they both understood and practised their duty as well, if not much better, than most of them who can read do it now. And I do not doubt but the solemn reading or declaring the will of God by his own ministers hath always the same power and efficacy upon the attentive hearers, whether they can, or cannot, read it themselves: for it is not to the private reading, but to the public reading of it, that the promises are made; from whence it comes to pass, that we commonly find ourselves more affected with hearing, suppose a chapter, once publicly read, than we are with reading the same chapter by ourselves many times over. Yet, nevertheless, they who

⁵ 2 Tim. iii. 6, 7.

⁶ 1 Thess. ii. 13.

can read have a great advantage over those who cannot; in that the impressions which are made upon their minds in hearing the word, may be much confirmed and excited in them by their reading it over again. As the Bereans, when they had heard the word from the apostle's mouth, and received it with all readiness of mind, they then "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so⁷." Their hearts were first opened to receive the word at their hearing of it; and when they afterwards read the Scriptures, and found that what they had heard was the same that was there written, this confirmed them in it. Upon which, as well as upon other accounts, it is necessary that the Scriptures should be translated into the vulgar tongue, that people may read them, and thereby know whether what they hear be agreeable to what God had there revealed; otherwise they may be led blindfold they know not whither; as they are in all places where they are not permitted to read the word: at least, they can never be sure that they believe and practise according to it. But they must take heed that they do not "wrest the Scriptures unto their own destruction⁸," as many unlearned and unstable people do in our age, as well as in the apostles'; and for that purpose they must read them with all reverence, meekness, and humility of mind, beseeching God to direct and assist them in it, and to "open their eyes, that they may behold wondrous things out of his law⁹."

And whatever it is they either hear or read out of God's law, they must be sure to 'mark' it. You must not hear so negligently, or read so cursorily and superficially, as if there was nothing worthy your notice in it; but you must mark, or observe, every expression, with the same care and diligence, as if you heard God himself speaking from between the cherubim, or upon the mount. For it is he that speaks all along in his Holy word, which, being given by his inspiration, is of that infinite extent and fulness, that, how oft soever a man

⁷ Acts xvii. 11.

⁸ 2 Pet. iii. 16.

⁹ Ps. cxix. 18.

reads it over, he may still find something remarkable which escaped him before. This, therefore, is absolutely necessary to our meditating aright in the law of God,—even to mark, or take special notice of, what he there saith, considering whose word it is, to what end it was spoken, what use is to be made of it, and how necessary it is to be observed.

For which purpose, as we mark, so we must also ‘learn’ the Scriptures; we must learn so as to understand them, at least, as much of them as we can: which I therefore add, because there are some things in the other Scriptures, as well as in St. Paul’s epistles, which are “hard to be understood¹.” There are some things revealed there, especially concerning Almighty God our Creator and Redeemer, which are above the reach of our finite understandings; which, therefore, we are not bound to understand, but only to believe, and to believe them only upon his word, who hath revealed them to us; and who, therefore, only revealed them, that we might believe them, though we cannot understand them; and so build our faith wholly upon his word and testimony, to the honour of his truth and faithfulness. There are other things hard to be understood only by reason of the weakness and corruption of our minds; which, therefore, are more or less understood, according as men are more or less learned in the original languages, and in such arts and sciences as may give any light to them; or else, are more or less enlightened by that Holy Spirit by which the Scriptures were given. And, therefore, when we meet with any thing which we do not understand, it doth not follow but other people may understand it; and if none can, it was written only for the exercise of our faith, that we may believe it upon His word “who cannot lie².”

But whatsoever things are hard to be understood in the Holy Scriptures, we may from thence conclude, that it is not generally necessary for all men to understand

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 16.

² Tit. i. 2.

them: for whatsoever is so, is as plainly there revealed as words can do it. And, therefore, without troubling ourselves about other matters (as we are too apt to do), we should apply our minds wholly to learn such things as belong to our everlasting peace,—what we must believe, and what we must do, that we may be saved: all which are so clearly taught in the Holy Scriptures, that a man of the meanest parts may learn them, as well as the greatest scholar in the world. Thus, therefore, it is that we ought to exercise ourselves, or meditate, in the law of God,—even so as to understand our whole duty to him, and to one another. He that hath learned this, hath learned enough; and whatsoever it is that a man learns, without this, will signify nothing to him.

Neither will it signify any thing for a man to hear, read, mark, and learn the Scriptures, unless he also ‘inwardly digest’ them, that is, unless he ruminate upon them, and, by a strong and lively faith, fix them upon his mind, so as to turn them into proper nourishment for his soul, that he may thereby grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and accordingly be fruitful in good works; in all such good works which are the fruit of that Holy Spirit by which the Scriptures were given; such as “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance³.” This was the great end for which the Scriptures were at first written, and for which we are now to hear, and read, and meditate upon them;—even that we may know the will of God, and do it; that we may live with a constant sense of what is there written upon our minds, so as firmly to believe the truths, fear the threatenings, trust on the promises, and observe the precepts, which are there revealed; and particularly that wherein this very thing is commanded by God, saying, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt

³ Gal. v. 22, 23.

meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success⁴." Where we see that it is God's express command, that we should every one meditate day and night in his law; that we are to meditate in it, so as to do what is there written; and that this is the way to have his blessing, prosperity, and good success: as our Lord hath taught us also with his own mouth, saying, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them⁵;" and, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it⁶;" and by his royal prophet in my text, where, describing the man that is truly blessed, he saith, that "his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night⁷." Wherefore that he who doth this is blessed, we cannot doubt, seeing he, who is the Fountain of all blessedness, hath here pronounced him to be so. And if we had no such oracle for it, yet we could not but conclude, that he who delights in the law of the Lord must needs be a blessed man, for that very reason, because he delights in the law of the Lord: for this shews that he is regenerate, and born again; that he is renewed, sanctified, and governed, by the Holy Spirit of God, in that he delights in the law that was given by his inspiration; which he could never do, but by the same Spirit by which it was given: and therefore the apostle saith, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man⁸." After his inward man, his spiritual part, so far as he was purified and led by the Spirit of God, so far he delighted in the law of God, and no farther; and, by consequence, he that really delights in the law of God is certainly led by his Spirit: but "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God⁹." "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ¹⁰," and

⁴ Josh. i. 8.⁵ John xiii. 17.⁶ Luke xi. 28.⁷ Ps. i. 2.⁸ Rom. vii. 22.⁹ Ib. viii. 14.¹⁰ Ver. 17.

therefore as blessed as it is possible for creatures to be; all the blessings promised in the Gospel being entailed upon them.

And as delighting in the law of the Lord is a certain sign that the man is blessed, so meditating in his law day and night is the ready way to be blessed for ever: for exercising ourselves continually in meditating upon the word of God, as I have shewn we ought to do, by this means we come to true wisdom, and a right understanding of all things necessary to eternal life. "I have more understanding," saith David, "than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation¹." By this means we know the "only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent²," which itself is eternal life. We know him as he himself would have us know him, according to the revelations which he hath given us of himself. By this our minds are enlightened, our judgments rightly informed, our faith confirmed, our hearts cleansed, our affections kept in order, and our whole souls sanctified through the truth; for his "word is truth³." By this we are preserved from all damnable errors and heresies; we are put in mind of our whole duty both to God and man; we are quickened and stirred up to the performance of it; we are armed against all temptations; we are directed which way to take in all straits and difficulties; we are protected, we are supported, we are comforted, in all sorts of trouble and afflictions. In short, by thus hearing, reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting God's holy word, we embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which he hath given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Wherefore, as ever ye desire to be blessed, so as to obtain eternal life, ye must "search the Scriptures," where alone ye can ever find it⁴. Ye must delight in the law of the Lord, and meditate therein both day and night; not only a little now and then, by the way;

¹ Ps. cxix. 99.

³ Ib. 17.

² John xvii. 3.

⁴ John v. 39.

but so constantly, so seriously, so effectually, that ye may believe, and love, and fear, and hope, and think, and speak, and act, as ye are there taught. Then ye will be blessed indeed, and declared to be so at the last day before all the world by Christ himself, pronouncing that blessed sentence upon you, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, &c."

SERMON XXV.

THE SINFULNESS AND MISCHIEF OF WORLDLY ANXIETY.

PHIL. iv. 6.

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

ALTHOUGH the commandments of God now seem grievous to us, and very difficult to be observed, yet certainly they were designed at first for our ease and pleasure; they being all so exactly adapted to our nature, so agreeable to the temper we were made of, that every act of obedience to them refresheth and delights our minds, as David long ago observed, calling the “commandments his delights¹,” and saying, that “in keeping of them there is great reward².” The same might be demonstrated by a particular induction of them, whereby it would be easy to shew that nothing is forbidden us but what is some way or other hurtful and prejudicial to us, nothing required of us but what is really for our good, and conduceth to our present comfort, as well as to our future happiness. I shall instance at present only in that which is enjoined in my text.

We cannot but be all sensible how great a misery it

¹ Ps. cxix. 143.

² Ib. xix. 11.

is to live in continual fears and cares about the things of this life, and how happily they live who are free from them, so as never to be disturbed or disquieted in their minds about any thing here below; especially if this proceeds from such principles, and is grounded upon such a foundation as is firm and lasting: and yet we not only may, but ought always to live thus; for this is that which is here enjoined us by the apostle, saying, "Be careful for nothing," &c.

The apostle here, in the close of his epistle to them, is directing the Philippians how both to carry and support themselves under the various occurrences of this present life. They were likely to meet with many crosses and troubles in the way to heaven; but, howsoever, he would not have them dejected, but always pleasant and cheerful under them: "Rejoice," saith he, "in the Lord always;" and, to press it the more home upon them, he repeats it again, saying, "Again I say rejoice³." And although they should receive many affronts and injuries from others, yet he would have them always of an even and sedate temper; not hot and furious, but candid and ingenuous, meek and patient, peaceable and good to all. "Let your moderation," saith he, "be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand," both to assist you at present, and, ere long, to rescue and deliver you. And because they were to expect to be sometimes brought into great straits and difficulties, not knowing well what to do; in such cases he adviseth them not to be too anxious or solicitous, but to do their duty, and to leave the issue to God: "Be careful," saith he, "for nothing; but in every thing give thanks," &c. This is, in general, the sense of the words. But lest we should mistake them, and that we may more clearly and fully understand the mind of the Holy Ghost in them, I shall, by his assistance, shew in what sense we are not, and in what sense we are, to understand this precept, "Be careful for nothing;" and then explain the following words,

³ Phil. iv. 4.

wherein the apostle directs what to do in all such cases as are apt to put us upon too much thoughtfulness and care, saying, "But by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

First, therefore, we may observe, that the apostle is here speaking not of spiritual but temporal things, and therefore where he saith, "Be careful for nothing," he is to be understood only of the things of this life, not of those things which concern the life to come; for they ought to be our chief and greatest care of all. And in this very place, where the apostle commands the Philippians to be "careful for nothing," he commends them for being careful of him, that is, of performing the duty which they owed him as the minister of Christ. "I rejoiced," saith he, "in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity⁴." From whence it appears, that the apostle himself distinguisheth between the care of doing our duty to God, and the care of this world; and commends the one, as much as he condemns the other. The same apostle elsewhere makes the same distinction more plain, saying, "But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife⁵:" where he first lays down the general rule, that he would have them ἀμερίμους, "without carefulness," the same that is in my text, μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε, "Be careful for nothing." But then he explains himself, by distinguishing between "the things that belong unto the Lord," and the "things of the world." About the latter he would have them without carefulness; but not about the former, not about the things that belong unto the Lord, how they may please the Lord. The rule is not to be understood of such things; for, as he himself

⁴ Phil. iv. 10.

⁵ 1 Cor. vii. 32, 33.

there intimates, we ought to take care of them, and not of the other. For that very reason we may take care of them, they being indeed the great and only things that we ought to be careful of: for, put all together, they are the “one thing needful,” which our Saviour speaks of in Luke x. 42, and therefore commands us to seek them before all things else: “Seek ye first,” saith he, “the kingdom of God and his righteousness⁶.” To the same purpose is that of St. Peter, where he requires us to “give all diligence,” to use the utmost of our care, to “add to our faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity: and so to make our calling and election sure⁷.”

And it is very observable, that the same apostle, who here commands us to “be careful for nothing,” elsewhere requires all Christians to “be careful to maintain good works⁸,” and that he himself was so: for, having reckoned up the many troubles he had met with in the world, he adds, “Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches⁹.” If St. Peter had said this, what a stir would the Church of Rome have made about it! How would they have triumphed in it, as a most infallible proof that he was Christ’s vicar upon earth, the universal bishop of the whole world, who had the care of all the churches! But it is well that it was not St. Peter, but St. Paul that said it; and he said it only to shew how careful he was in the discharge of his apostolical office towards the whole Church of Christ; and so hath left us an undeniable argument, that he was at least as much an universal bishop as St. Peter was: and also that we, after his example, ought to be careful to perform our whole duty in our respective places; and, by consequence, that when he

⁶ Matt. vi. 33.

⁸ Tit. iii. 8.

⁷ 2 Pet. i. 5—7. 10.

⁹ 2 Cor. xi. 28.

commands us to “be careful for nothing,” he doth not mean that we should not be careful to avoid whatsoever is offensive to God, and to do what is pleasing in his sight, to “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world:” but rather that we be so careful of such things, as to be careful of nothing else.

But here we may observe, that even in such things we may be too careful, that is, as the original word signifies, too “anxious,” too much distracted and divided in our thoughts about them; as many are, who do what they can to live according to the rules of the Gospel, and yet suspect their spiritual estate; and, never thinking they can do enough, run into the contrary extreme,—of doing many things which are not required at their hands. Such are they who whip, and scourge, and macerate, their bodies, and so make themselves unserviceable to God and the world. And such are they, also, who, out of a groundless care and fear of offending God, scruple the doing of such things as he hath nowhere forbidden, and therefore will not be offended at their doing of them. This is the case not only of those who dissent from us, but of many good people among ourselves, who, being of a fearful and melancholy temper, indulge a strange kind of nicety and scrupulosity of conscience about things in themselves indifferent. And this seems to be that which the wise man forbids, where he saith, “Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself¹⁰?” As if he had said, Be not superstitious, or over scrupulous, about such things in religion as thou mayest, or mayest not, do without sin; nor make thyself over wise, as if thou sawest virtue, or vice, where nobody else can see it: “Why shouldest thou destroy thyself?” or rather, as the word signifies, Why shouldest thou stupify, astonish, or confound thyself? For so they all do, who trouble their heads about such little things; they do but confound and perplex their

¹⁰ Eccles. vii. 16.

own thoughts, and take them off from the more substantial parts of religion. This, therefore, is that which we ought to avoid: we ought not to be too careful and solicitous about doubtful and indifferent things; but apply our minds wholly to the plain and necessary matters of the law, and trouble ourselves no farther; but trust in our blessed Saviour for the pardon of our defects, and for God's acceptance of what we do, upon the account of what he hath done and suffered for us.

But I shall speak no more of that at present, because the apostle speaks not of it in my text; for by saying, "Be careful for nothing," he means only that we should not be careful about temporal or earthly things; that we should avoid those cares which our Saviour calls, *μερίμνας βιωτικάς*, "the cares of this life"¹¹, and *μερίμνας τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου*, "the cares of this world".

But here, also, we must take care that we do not mistake his meaning, so as to think that he would not have us take any care at all of any thing here below: for so long as we live in this world, it is absolutely necessary that we take some care about our living in it. So long as our souls are united to our bodies, we are bound, by the laws of God and nature, to take care of our bodies, as well as souls. Our souls, indeed, and their concerns, are to be regarded in the first place; but after them we ought to look to our bodies also, that they may want nothing that is necessary for their subsistence, so long as God shall see good to continue our souls in them. And for that purpose all who cannot well subsist without it, not only may, but ought to, follow some honest trade or calling, whereby to support themselves and their families.

But, because the right understanding of this may be of great use to many here present, I shall briefly give you what instructions and directions I think necessary about it, in these following propositions:—

¹¹ Luke xxi. 34.

¹ Matt. xiii. 22.

First, all are bound to follow some calling or trade, unless they have enough to live upon without it. I add this,—unless they have enough to live upon without following any trade; because there are some who have great estates conveyed to them by inheritance, or by gift, from their ancestors or relations; others, who, by God's blessing upon their own endeavours, have attained as much as is sufficient to maintain them while they are in the world, and so need not follow any trade, at least for that purpose. But such must not look upon themselves as having nothing to do in the world: for really they have as much to do, if not more, than other people: forasmuch as they who follow a trade, always know their business,—their work lies before them: whereas others are forced, or, at least, ought, to study every day what to do, and how to employ their time and their estates, so as to give a good account of them at the last day. And when they have found it out, they ought to apply their minds as seriously to it, as if their lives depended upon it; for so their eternal life doth, though not their temporal. They may, perhaps, live well enough without doing any thing in this world; but they cannot expect to live well in the next world without it; for their welfare there depends not upon what they have, but upon what they do, here: insomuch that they, who do nothing but live upon their estates, will have but little cause to be glad they had estates to live upon, when they shall hear their great Lord and Master pronounce that dreadful sentence against them, which he in the parable did against that idle servant, who did not improve, but hid his master's talent in a napkin, saying, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth²."

Wherefore they whom God hath blessed with considerable estates, or with such a competency whereby they are able to keep themselves and families without the assistance of a trade, they must have a care that

² Matt. xxv. 30.

they do not live idly, and to no purpose, in the world, mere cyphers that signify nothing, but, like the tree in the parable, which only “cumbered the ground,” and therefore was fit for nothing but to be “cut down, and cast into the fire;” but such persons ought rather to look upon themselves as being of an higher calling, and as having more to do than others: they have more time to spare, and therefore should spend more in their public and private devotions; their thoughts are freer from the cares of this world, and therefore ought to be more intent upon the next; they need not trouble their heads about getting an estate, and therefore should be more careful how they use it; they have commonly more than what they have real need of themselves, and therefore should give more to those who want it; in short, they have more advantages of serving and glorifying God in the world, and therefore are more obliged to do it, as they tender their own eternal welfare.

When I seriously consider these things, I cannot but sometimes wonder with myself, what should make men so eager in getting great estates for their children, when by that means they do but expose their children to greater hardships and temptations than they themselves lay under, and make it more difficult for them ever to get to heaven; our Saviour himself, by whom alone we can come thither, having told us with his own mouth, that “a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven³.” And even in this life, all things considered, they who are forced to follow a trade, and do accordingly follow it as they ought, may live every way as comfortably, and much more safely, than they. And how much soever a man hath, it is certainly his best and wisest course to have some trade, or calling, or office, or at least some business, either public or private, always to do, so long as he is able, whereby he may employ his time, his parts, his learning, his strength, his interest, his estate, and whatsoever talents God hath put into his hand; so that he may

³ Matt. xix. 23.

answer God's end in sending him into the world, and in bestowing such blessings upon him.

For, in plain terms, God did not make man to sit still and do nothing. The first man he made, he had no sooner made him but he immediately put him into the garden of Eden "to dress it and to keep it⁴." This was the first Adam's employment, even in the state of innocence and perfection. And the second Adam, too, until he entered upon his office of Mediator, followed a trade that tended to the same end; for Joseph, to whom his mother was espoused, being a carpenter, he himself is said to be of the same trade⁵, and his business was to make "ploughs and yokes for oxen, in order to tilling the ground," as Justin Martyr informs us, who lived soon after him. And one reason, as the same father observes, wherefore our Lord followed that trade, was, that he might teach us, ἐνεργῇ βίον, "an active life;" to avoid idleness, as the great occasion of vice and wickedness. And as our Lord hath taught us this by his example, so by his precept too: for St. Paul, speaking in his name, and by the direction of his Holy Spirit, laid this as a command upon the Thessalonians, and, in them, upon all Christians, saying, "For when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any man would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread⁶." Where we may observe, that he reckons no man's bread his own, but what he gets by his own labour and industry. But by "bread" we are here to understand, as the word usually signifies in Scripture, "all things necessary to the support of human life." Such things every man is obliged to provide for himself; and not only for himself, but likewise for his kindred and relations, which are not able to provide them for themselves. For the same apostle

⁴ Gen. ii. 15.

⁵ Mark vi. 3.

⁶ 2 Thess. iii. 10—12.

saith in another place, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house," or kindred, "he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel⁷." "He hath denied the faith," that is, he hath renounced that faith which works by love, and in effect hath apostatized from the Christian religion, by not observing the precepts of it; and so is as bad, nay, "worse than infidels." For infidels, or heathens, by the very light of nature, used to take care of their parents, and children, and others that were nearly related to them. And, therefore, he who professes the faith of Christ, and so knows it to be his duty from the word of God himself, if he notwithstanding will not do it, he is really worse than an infidel, and will be more severely punished for it another day.

And suppose a man really hath, or thinks he hath, enough for himself and family, he is not therefore discharged from his calling, so long as God gives him opportunity and strength to follow it: for that a man is bound to do, not only for his own sake, and his relations, but likewise that he may be thereby enabled to do good to others also; according to that of the apostle, "Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth⁸." "To him that needeth," that is, any man that wants the necessaries of this life: such a one every man is bound to relieve, although he is forced to work hard to do it. And one great end which men propose to themselves in carrying on their trade ought to be this, even that they may be in a capacity of helping and relieving such as are in want, and cannot help or relieve themselves.

But as all men are for these ends bound to follow some trade or calling, so, in the next place, we must observe, that the trade or calling they follow should be lawful and honest: the thing they do should be "good," as St. Paul speaks in the words before quoted. It

⁷ 1 Tim. v. 8.

⁸ Eph. iv. 28.

must not be vicious in itself, nor minister occasion of vice to others: for then it is not a trade or calling, but treason or rebellion against God. But that which a man employs himself in for the purposes before mentioned must be either commanded, or approved of, or, at least, allowed, by the word of God. It must be some way useful either to Church or State, either to men's souls or bodies, to private persons or to the public society in which they dwell. The calling which contributes to any such uses is lawful and good; otherwise not: for otherwise a man spends his time to ill purposes, or, which is almost as bad, to none at all.

Wherefore, as ever you desire to employ yourselves well, as becometh honest, good men, you must be sure to follow such a calling as suits with the apostle's rule, where he saith, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things⁹." For these are the things that make a calling good, profitable to a man's self, useful to the world, and acceptable to Almighty God.

In the last place, whatsoever such trade or calling a man is of, he ought to follow it with care and diligence; not to loiter away his time, and neglect his business upon every slight occasion; but always remember that his calling is the means whereby God hath designed to supply him and his with all things necessary for this life; and, therefore, if he neglect it, he doth not only expose himself to ruin and poverty, but he wrongs, he robs, his family and poor relations of the maintenance which God hath provided for them by that means. There is no honest and lawful calling that a man is of, but, if it be not his own fault, he may live comfortably upon it, and get as much as God knows to be necessary and proper for him in his place and

⁹ Phil. iv. 8.

station; and so be as rich as he need be in this world. But for that purpose it is not enough that he hath a calling, but he must be diligent and industrious in it: for, as the wise man observes, "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich¹," not of itself, but because the blessing of God attends it, without which all our care and diligence will come to nothing. But, as we have no ground to expect God's blessing except we be diligent, if we be so we have no cause to mistrust it; for he is never wanting to any man that is not first wanting to himself.

Hence, therefore, I would recommend to your serious consideration and daily practice that excellent rule of the apostle, where he commands, "That ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing²." He doth not say, that ye may abound in riches, purchase great estates, or advance your families; but, "that ye may have lack of nothing;" which is enough in all reason; for he who lacks nothing, is as rich as he that hath all things: for he hath all things he lacks. But for this purpose ye must "study," first, "to be quiet," to live peaceably with all men: and then ye must "study" likewise "to do your own business;" τὰ ἴδια, "those things which are proper to yourselves, and to your own calling," without meddling with other men's affairs any further than to do them all the good ye can. So that, in short, whatsoever trade, calling, office, or employment a man is of, it is his duty to mind it; and to mind it also with care and diligence, that, by God's blessing upon it, he may be able to maintain himself and his family by it.

And, therefore, when the apostle in my text saith, "Be careful for nothing," he cannot be so understood, as if he forbade us to use all due care and diligence,

¹ Prov. x. 4.

² 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12.

every one in his own particular calling: for this would be to forbid that in this place, which he himself elsewhere, and the Scriptures all along, command.

But what, then, doth he here forbid? He forbids, in general, that over-carefulness, solicitude, and anxiety of mind, about the things of this life, which many, too many, are subject to; who, never thinking they shall have enough, and always fearing that, notwithstanding all their care, they shall come to want, their minds are distracted, their thoughts trouble them, their hearts are divided and rent as it were in pieces, casting this way and that way, and every way, and yet know not which way to take; like a troubled sea, tossed to and fro with every wind that blows. Whatsoever happens, they have no peace, no rest, or quiet, in themselves: if they lose never so little, they think presently they are undone: if they get never so much, unless it be as much as they expected, it is all one: they moil, and toil; they rise up early, and sit up late, and eat their bread with carefulness; and all for fear they should have none to eat: how much soever God hath given them at present, they dare not trust him for the future; and therefore are still bustling about to provide for themselves as well as they can. If they be in any strait, they think of every thing how to get out, except Him who alone can help them. If they seem to be in any danger, though it be never so remote, it strikes them to the heart, and puts them into an hurry and confusion. If they have any business more than ordinary upon their hands, they stretch their brains to the highest pitch, till they come to their wits' end how to do it to the best advantage for themselves. By which means they live, as it were, in a maze, or labyrinth, not knowing which way to go, and yet running about as if they did. In short, they live as without God in the world, or at least without any trust or dependence upon him: and, therefore, as if they were their own carvers, they bend their minds wholly to take care of themselves, and of all their concerns in

this life, without ever looking up to him to direct and assist them in it.

This is that carefulness which the apostle here forbids: and not only the height of it, as I have now described it, but every degree of it, and every such indisposition or distemper of mind as tends towards it.

And you will not wonder that he should forbid it, when you consider the vanity, the trouble, the sinfulness, and the mischiefs of it: which I shall therefore put you in mind of, that ye may more fully understand the nature of it, and also be better armed against it for the future.

The vanity of it appears sufficiently, in that our carefulness is all to no purpose about the things of this life; for, after all, they are wholly at God's disposal. He gives, and takes, and doth what he will with them. He measures them out to all as he sees good; and it is not in our power either to direct or hinder him. This is the argument which our Lord himself makes use of, to shew the vanity of all worldly cares, saying, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature³," or age? And, as for our thoughtfulness about what we shall eat, or drink, or wear, he there shews that God feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field most gorgeously, without their care or labour; and, therefore, men being much better than they, have no cause to doubt but he will provide all things necessary for them, without their being so careful and solicitous about it; and, by consequence, all their carefulness and solicitude must needs be in vain, and to no purpose⁴. Neither is this only a great vanity, but, as the wise man speaks, it is "vexation of spirit" too. It is a great trouble and disquietness to our minds to be always upon the rack, distorted and distracted with cares and fears, as the men of this world commonly are, "piercing themselves through with many sorrows⁵," as the apostle observes, and so making their own lives

³ Matt. vi. 27.

⁴ Ver. 25, 26. 28. 30.

⁵ 1 Tim. vi. 10.

very uneasy and troublesome, always tormenting their heads, and their hearts too, with excessive solicitude either how to get more, or else to keep what they have got. And, as if they had not trouble enough at present, they will trouble themselves, too, about what is future; and grieve to-day, because they may have occasion to do so to-morrow. This is that which our blessed Saviour forewarns us against, saying, "Take therefore no thought," or be not careful, "for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof⁶." As if he had said, Every day brings care and trouble enough along with it: and it is sufficient that you bear and manage it aright as it comes. But do not anticipate troubles, and make yourselves miserable now, because ye may be so anon. Be not thoughtful about what may, or may not, happen hereafter: for this will not prevent, or alleviate, but aggravate and hasten your troubles; as they find by woful experience, who concern themselves too much about future events.

And it would be well if there was nothing else but trouble in it. But, alas! this excessive carefulness and anxiety of mind about worldly things is sinful, as well as troublesome. It is expressly forbidden by Almighty God in my text, and in many other places of Scripture: and it is always accompanied with, or rather it proceeds from, one of the greatest sins a man can be guilty of,—even unbelief, or, at least, want of faith and trust in God: as our Saviour intimates, where, arguing against it, he saith, "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith⁷?" They must needs be of little faith indeed, if any at all, who are solicitous about such things as God hath promised to give them, without their being so; and therefore mistrust his promises, as well as break his laws, and so are guilty

⁶ Matt. vi. 34.

⁷ Ver. 30.

of a double sin in every single act of such excessive thoughtfulness about any thing in this world.

But who is able to reckon up, or describe, the many and great mischiefs which attend this sin? I shall not undertake to do that; but shall only put you in mind of some of them, which, if duly considered, will make you beware of it, and dread the thoughts of ever falling into it, much more of living in it.

First, therefore, it is this carefulness for the world that hinders and keeps you off from performing your duty unto God. So long as your minds are so intent about the things of this life, it is impossible that you should love, fear, or trust in God, or serve and honour him as you ought to do: no, ye have other business to mind than what he hath set you. And, therefore, although ye have never so many opportunities of performing your devotions to him, ye can find no time, or, rather, ye cannot find it in your hearts to do it; your thoughts being wholly taken up with other affairs, of a different and quite contrary nature.

This our Saviour himself noted in Martha. She and her sister Mary keeping house together, our Lord was pleased to honour them with his company. Martha being mightily pleased, as well she might, with his company, was very careful and busy about providing for his entertainment, or, as the text saith, "was cumbered about much serving:" while Mary in the mean time sat at Jesus' feet, hearing his divine discourses. Upon which Martha, having more upon her hands than she could well do, desired our Lord to bid her sister come and help her. But, instead of that, our Lord said to her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her⁸." If it ever can be lawful to be cumbered with worldly business, it must needs be so upon such an extraordinary occasion, when

⁸ Luke x. 41, 42.

they had got so divine a Guest in their house. Yet we see our Saviour plainly reproves Martha for her over-carefulness even upon that occasion, because it hindered her from attending, as her sister did, to his doctrine. And I fear there be many among us, who, upon slighter occasions, neglect the service of God; being so "careful and troubled about many things," that they never think of "the one thing needful," except, perhaps, upon the Lord's day, when they cannot mind the world, and so have nothing else to do. For we find, by sad experience, that upon the week-days, when you can follow your worldly business, our churches are empty, and God's service neglected; which is a plain demonstration that your over-carefulness for this life hinders you from taking any care at all of the next.

Neither doth this hinder you only from serving God, but it hinders you also in the doing of it. For so long as your minds are distracted about the world, it is impossible you should serve God without distraction: as Christ himself saith, "No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon⁹." Ye cannot possibly be intent upon two things at the same time, and especially upon things so directly opposite to one another, as God and the world. And, therefore, so long as your thoughts are wholly taken up with the things of this life, as they commonly are, it is no wonder that ye cannot keep them close to any duty ye perform to God; but in the midst of your most solemn devotions, public or private, worldly thoughts will still be crowding in, and spoil all ye do. From whence ye may see the reason why there are so few in the world that serve God at all, and much fewer that serve him well: most being such as the prophet speaks of, who "come before God as the people cometh, and sit before him as his people, and with their mouth shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness¹."

And as this disturbs men in doing their duty, so it deprives them of all the benefit and comfort which

⁹ Matt. vi. 24.

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

they might receive from what they do, and makes the means of grace ineffectual and useless. For this ye have Christ's own observation and word, who, in the parable of the sower, saith, "He that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful²." From whence ye may see the great cause why men in this age hear so much, and practise so little;—even because whatsoever you hear, the cares of this world immediately put it out of your thoughts. You never think any more of it; and then it is no wonder that ye are never the wiser or better for it.

And yet this is not all neither: for this excessive carefulness about the things of this life doth not only hinder you from doing or receiving good, but it exposeth you to all manner of sin and wickedness. The wise man tells you, that "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent³." And St. Paul, to the same purpose; "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition⁴." And you cannot but all observe the same of all manner of worldly cares; how they put men upon envy and hatred, upon wrath and fury, strife and contention with one another; upon lying, swearing, and perjury; upon oppression and extortion; upon cheating, stealing, and robbing upon the high-way: yea, upon going to the devil himself, and consulting him and his agents about their worldly concerns.

This I rather mention in a more particular manner, because I have heard there are some in this city, as well as elsewhere, who, if they have lost any thing, or would know something of their friends beyond sea, or of their future state in this world, presently go to those which they call astrologers, wizards, conjurors, or the like, to be informed about it; which is plainly going to the devil for it. For whether those kind of

² Matt. xiii. 22.³ Prov. xxviii. 20.⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 9.

people they go to deal with him or no, they who go to them consult them as if they did; and so are co-partners with them in their wickedness, whatsoever it is, whether it be real witchcraft and sorcery, or only confederacy and cheat. And, therefore, as by the law of Moses a witch was not suffered to live⁵, so in the same law God hath expressly commanded that none shall seek after, nor so much as regard, wizards, or such as have familiar spirits⁶. And if any do so, he saith, that he will set his face against them, and cut them off from his people⁷. And, indeed, it is very rare but God inflicts some remarkable judgment upon those who consult such as exercise, or pretend to, that which they call the black art. And if they happen to escape in this life, they will smart more severely for it in the next; it being one of the greatest sins that a man can be guilty of: it is a kind of apostasy; a leaving God, to go to the devil: and all from excessive carefulness about something in this world; which is plainly the only cause that puts silly people upon such wicked practices as these are.

I shall add to these only one more of the many mischiefs which arise from the same cause; and that is the same which Christ himself puts you in mind of, where he saith, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares⁸." Where ye see how he who will be your Judge, being desirous that you should not be surprised, or taken unawares, hath forewarned you that the cares of this life will make you as unfit to appear before him as surfeiting and drunkenness itself. Which when I sometimes consider with myself, I cannot but pity those who go out of this world, as many, I fear, do, in the midst of worldly cares, and, by consequence, as unfit to die as they who are downright drunk: and therefore must beg of you always to re-

⁵ Exod. xxii. 18.

⁷ Ib. xx. 6.

⁶ Lev. xix. 31.

⁸ Luke xxi. 34.

member your Saviour's words, and take heed that your hearts be not overcharged with the cares of this life, lest ye die too in that condition, and so be miserable for ever.

But you will say, perhaps, What would you have us do? would you not have us to mind our trade? Yes, by all means; you are bound in conscience to do it, as I shewed before. It is your duty to mind every one his own calling in this world, while ye live in it. But it is also your duty to mind God, and that world where ye must live for ever. And although you ought to use all due care and diligence about your trade, as if ye were to live by it; yet you must not be so careful and anxious about it, as if you could live by that without God's blessing upon it; which you can have no ground to expect, if your minds be more intent upon that than upon Him in whom you live, and from whom, after all, you must receive it, or else have nothing to live on. And, therefore, if you would follow your trades as becometh Christians, you must be diligent and industrious in them: but you must not be fearful and solicitous about the event and success of them, but leave that wholly and solely to God; trusting and depending upon him to give you that success, which he, in his infinite wisdom, knows to be best for you; and trouble your heads no more about it. This you will find to be not only the most easy and comfortable way of living and trading in the world, but likewise the most effectual course you can take never to want any thing that is necessary or good for you: for God himself will provide all such things for you, if you trust upon him for it.

This holds good not only as to your trading and trafficking in the world for a livelihood, but likewise as to all the changes and chances of this mortal life. Whatsoever danger you fear, whatsoever strait or difficulty you are in, you must not suffer your minds to be disturbed or distracted about it; but lift up your hearts to God, and commit yourselves and your affairs all to him; and then he will be sure to take care of you, so

as either to bring you out of your straits, or, which is better, turn them to your advantage. For this you have his own word, where he saith, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you⁹." And again, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved¹." And elsewhere, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass²." There are many such promises in Holy Scripture, whereby we are fully assured that, if we use the means for attaining any thing that is truly good for us, and be not over-careful about them, but trust in God for his blessing upon them, we shall certainly attain the thing we aimed at, or something better.

This is the more to be observed here, because it will help us to understand the latter part of my text, where the apostle, having said, "Be careful for nothing," adds, "but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." "Be made known unto God," may ye say? Doth not God know them before? Yes, certainly: but, as a father knows his child wants such and such things, and yet will not give him them till he hath asked them of him; so God knows, as our Saviour saith, "that we have need of these things,"—the things of this life; but before he gives them he will have us make known, and acknowledge, our want of them to him, and pray to him for them; to signify our dependence upon him, and our obligation to him for what we have. Concerning which there are three things observable in my text.

First, that as we are to "be careful for nothing," we ought to pray for every thing: "in every thing," saith

⁹ 1 Pet. v. 6, 7.

¹ Ps. lv. 22.

² Ib. xxxvii. 3—5.

the apostle, great or small. Whatsoever it is we want, we must request it of God.

Secondly, to our prayers and supplications we must always add thanksgiving: thankfulness for what we have, being the best means whereby to obtain what we want. And then,

Lastly, this is all the apostle would have us do in every thing, in every condition, in every circumstance of our whole life,—even “by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make known our requests unto God;” and when we have done that, he would have us trouble ourselves no more about any thing, but leave all to God, with a sure trust and confidence that he, according to his promise, will grant our requests which we have made known to him, so far as he knows it to be good for us. This is the course he would have us take upon all occasions. And he that takes this course, need be careful for nothing, for he will have God himself to take care of all things for him: as we may see in many instances.

When Jehoshaphat was in a great strait, by reason of vast armies that were coming against him, he made known his case to God, saying, “We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee³.” He prayed and trusted in God, who therefore fought for him, making his enemies destroy one another.

When Nebuchadnezzar had threatened the three children that they should be thrown into a fiery furnace unless they would worship the image which he had set up; they were so far from being solicitous, as most people would have been about such a matter as concerned their lives, that they plainly told him, “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, [as thou speakest,] our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will

³ 2 Chron. xx. 12.

deliver us out of thine hand, O king⁴." They were not careful about it, but trusted in God, who therefore sent his angel to deliver them. This is the rule which Christ prescribed to his disciples in all the troubles they were likely to meet with, saying, "When they deliver you up, take no thought," be not careful, "how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak⁵." If ever they might be careful, it might be upon such occasions; but even upon such occasions as those our Lord would have them take no thought about it, but only trust in the promise which he made them. I cannot omit that remarkable instance of St. Paul and Silas, who, being in prison, were so far from being thoughtful how to get out, that "at midnight they prayed, and sang praises unto God:" upon which the prison doors were opened, their hands loosed, and next morning they were both released⁶.

There are many such instances in Scripture of God's particular care of those who trust on him. And though these may seem extraordinary, and ye cannot expect that he should now work miracles for you; yet, if you will but make trial of it, ye will find him still both able and ready to assist and help you upon all occasions by his ordinary Providence, as effectually as if it was extraordinary and miraculous.

This, therefore, is that which I would now advise you to. Whatsoever business ye have upon your hands, how great and difficult soever it may seem, do not stretch your thoughts, be not careful about it, but do what you think at present to be best; and apply yourselves to God, believing and trusting on him for his direction and assistance; and then ye will find that all will be well, far better than your solicitude and thoughtfulness can make it. For then God himself will take the business into his own hands. As ye depend upon him for it, he will concern himself in it. He will direct your thoughts to the best means, and

⁴ Dan. iii. 16, 17.

⁵ Matt. x. 19.

⁶ Acts xvi. 25, 26.

assist and bless you in the use of them. He will keep off every thing that may any way impede or hinder it. He will order all things relating to it, so as to make them concur to the effecting of it. And if you thus always cast your care upon him, he will always take care of you. He will instruct you by his wisdom, he will guide you by his counsel, he will assist you by his grace, he will sanctify and comfort you by his Holy Spirit, he will strengthen and protect you by his almighty power, and at last receive you to himself in glory, through the merits of his only Son: "To whom, &c."

SERMON XXVI.

CHRIST THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.

JOHN xiv. 6.

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life :
no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

It was a great privilege which the Jews had above all other people, that they had often prophets inspired and sent by God among them, to acquaint them with his will ; and had always a certain way to know it upon any great occasion ; for if they did but go to the high priest, he, putting on the breast-plate of judgment, by the Urim and Thummim in it, perfectly understood the mind of God in the business they came about, and accordingly gave his responses, or answers, to it. We have no such way of consulting Almighty God under the Gospel : and the reason is, because we have no need or occasion for it ; for now God himself, in the form and likeness of man, hath with his own mouth revealed all things to us that are necessary for any man to know ; and hath caused such his oracles, or divine revelations, to be committed to writing, and left upon record, that all may freely consult them, and from thence be informed of his will and pleasure in all things, wherein any man can be under any obligation or necessity to know it. So that if there be any doubt, scruple, or difficulty, which cannot be resolved from something that is there said and delivered to us by God

himself, we may certainly conclude, that it is God's will that we should not trouble our heads about it; for he, be sure, who came into the world on purpose to make and to shew us the way to happiness and salvation, hath told us all things that he would have us know in order to our obtaining of it. And, therefore, what he hath not told us, we may be confident it is no matter whether we know it or no; and that he would have us lay aside all such impertinent and unnecessary questions which he hath not seen good to determine, and to apply ourselves wholly to the study of such great truths as he hath revealed to us, and to take them upon his word; looking upon that as the answer of God to all such questions which we are any way concerned to be resolved in. And if we thus consult his oracles upon any such question, we may there find as clear and certain a solution of it, as the thing is capable of.

As, for example,—the chief thing that we all ought to inquire after is,—the way whereby we may go to him that made us, so as to have his love and favour, in which our life and happiness consisteth. This is that which Moses, when he had the nearest access that ever mortal had to God, desired to know of him, saying, “I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight¹.” Where he plainly desired to know the way which God had appointed, whereby men might come to the right knowledge of him, and find grace and favour with him; which he afterwards expressed, by saying, “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory².” This being the way whereby God designed to manifest the glory of his grace and truth to mankind. In answer to which request the Lord said to him, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee³.” And accordingly, “the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, mer-

¹ Exod. xxxiii. 13.² Ver. 18.³ Ver. 19.

ciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation⁴," which words being so solemnly proclaimed by Almighty God himself, there must needs be more in them than what is commonly thought of. To me the whole mystery of the Gospel seems to be contained in them,—the wonderful way which God hath made for the reconciling himself unto mankind, by his Son Jesus Christ. It is in him that God hath promised to be gracious and merciful to them; it is in him that all such promises are yea and Amen; it is in him that he is "abundant in goodness and truth:" for "goodness," or "grace, and truth came by Jesus Christ⁵:" it is in him that God forgives iniquity, and transgression, and sin; and yet by no means clears the guilty, or, rather, will not suffer sin to go altogether unpunished: for he hath laid the punishment of it upon him; visiting the iniquities of mankind upon his Son, as he visiteth "the iniquities of the fathers upon their children, and upon their children's children, unto the third and fourth generation;" even in the highest manner that could be, so as to have full and complete satisfaction made unto him for them. Thus God shewed Moses his way how to find grace in his sight,—even by Christ the Saviour of the world; according to the request that Moses had made to him. And thus David prayed to God, that his "way might be known upon earth, and his saving health," or, as the word signifies, "his salvation, unto all people⁶;" even that way, whereby they might all be saved by Christ, the promised Seed, who is our only Saviour, for there is "no salvation in any other⁷." But he is not only our Saviour, but "salvation" itself⁸.

Thus even in the Old Testament God was pleased

⁴ Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

⁵ John i. 17.

⁶ Ps. lxxvii. 2.

⁷ Acts iv. 12.

⁸ Luke ii. 30.

to shew men the way of salvation ; at least so much of it, as rendered them inexcusable unless they walked in it. But in the New it is made as plain as words can make it : so that if we do but consult the oracles of God which are there recorded, we cannot miss of it, but may have it from his own infallible word how we may come to him so as to be eternally happy in him. This he hath there often told us with his own divine mouth ; particularly in my text, where the eternal God our Saviour expressly saith, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

The occasion of his uttering this divine sentence was this:—He being now to leave this world, lest his disciples should be overwhelmed with too much grief and sorrow for his departure from them, he acquainted them that he was only going home to his own Father’s house, and that he went thither to prepare a place for them, and all that should believe in him ; and that afterwards he would come again, and receive them to himself, to live with him for ever⁹. When he had said this, taking it for granted that they all understood him, he adds, “and whither I go ye know, and the way ye know¹.” But St. Thomas, one of the twelve, not apprehending his meaning aright, said, “Lord, we know not whither thou goest ; and how can we know the way²?” Upon which our blessed Saviour, according to his usual way of replying to any thing which was said to him, so as to utter something at the same time that should not be only pertinent to that particular purpose, but likewise of universal consequence, and necessary for all mankind to know, took occasion to utter this divine oracle, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Whereby he certified both that apostle and all other men, not only whither he was going,—even unto the Father,—but likewise of the way whereby they may go after him, so as at last to come unto him,—

⁹ John xiv. 1—3.¹ Ver. 4.² Ver. 5.

even by himself. And the better to assure them of it, he doth not only say, "I am the way," but adds, "I am the truth and the life;" that is, the true and living way in the highest manner that can be, in the very abstract the truth and the life itself: so that we may certainly depend upon him as "the way" unto the Father, seeing he is "the truth;" and not doubt but he can carry us through that way, and bring us to the end of it, seeing he is "the life" too, and so can quicken, actuate, and enable us to walk in that way without fainting or stumbling. And that we may know that he is not only the way, but the only way, he adds, "no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

But that we may both fully understand, and be duly affected with, this great truth, uttered by Him who is the truth itself, it will be necessary to consider what he means by coming to the Father, and how he himself is the way, and the only way, so that "no man cometh unto the Father, but by him," and that by him any man may come unto the Father.

Who is here meant by the Father we all know,—even the most high God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, whom our Lord Jesus Christ, being his only-begotten Son, usually calls his Father, and in general the Father, as in my text: where "coming to the Father by him" is the same which elsewhere is expressed by "coming unto God by him³." But what it is for men "to come to God," is not so easy to be understood.

For He, whom we call God, is an immense, infinite, eternal, incomprehensible Being, dwelling in that light which no man can approach unto, "whom no man hath seen, nor can see⁴." How then can any man ever come to Him? We little worms, that creep and crawl upon the surface of the earth, how can we come to Him that made both heaven and earth; to him whose glory the "heaven of heavens is not able to contain?" We, who cannot get up so far as to the sun or moon, or any of

³ Heb. vii. 25.

⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 16.

the stars, how can we ever come at Him, who created and upholds them all by the power of his word, and is infinitely more above them, than they are above us? Our very thoughts, at their utmost stretch, at the greatest height they are able to ascend, are so far from reaching Him, that we cannot think aright of Him, but as of One that is infinitely above the highest of our thoughts. How, then, can we come to Him; or so much as think what it is to do so; especially seeing that we are not only finite, and, as such, infinitely below Him, but are likewise corrupted and defiled, and, as such, directly contrary to Him? He is a most pure, just, and holy act, purity, justice, holiness itself: we are all impure, unrighteous, and sinful creatures: how then can we approach to Him? We that are rotten stubble, how can we come near Him, that is a consuming fire? We could never have thought it possible, if he himself had not told us it is. And now he hath told us of it, we could never have understood what he means by our coming unto him, unless he himself had explained it to us. But now he hath made it plain and easy to us, by acquainting us how we may do it,—even by Jesus Christ, who being the only way, whereby we can come unto the Father, we can never understand what it is to come unto the Father any other way than by considering how we may do it by him who here saith, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

First, therefore, it is by Jesus Christ, and him only, that any man can come to the knowledge of God the Father. Though we have still, even in our corrupt estate, some general and confused notions of such a Being presiding over the world; yet we could never have known what he is, or what we ought to believe concerning him, if Jesus Christ had not revealed him to us. As but too plainly appears: for those in the East and West Indies, who never had his revelations any way imparted to them, before Christians came among them, what unaccountable and absurd notions had they of God! what strange and ridiculous resem-

blances did they make of him ! some making him like one thing, some like another ; some representing him under the finest, others under the ugliest shape they could think of : and all imagining him like something or other which they could see. The same was the case also of the old heathens, and of all mankind that never had any other knowledge of God than what corrupt nature, or their own natural reason, suggested to them ; though they “knew God,” or that there was such a Being in the world, yet they did not “glorify him as God, neither were thankful ; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things⁵.”

It is from such as these that we must gather what to think of that natural religion which is so much cried up by some in our days in opposition to the revealed : whatsoever they may pretend, there is nothing of true religion in it ; forasmuch as mankind, by nature, have no true knowledge of the God they ought to worship, much less can they perform such worship to him which may be properly called religion : for nothing that men do can be truly called the worshipping of God, unless it be done according to his will. But how can they know that, unless he himself hath revealed it to them ? Hence it is, that they who do not believe that God hath revealed himself and his will to mankind, as well as they who never heard of any such revelations, they all live as without God in the world : and so would all mankind have always lived, but for Jesus Christ our Lord.

But Jesus Christ our Lord hath made known all that is necessary, or, indeed, possible for mankind in this imperfect state, to know concerning God and the Father : this he did of old by his Spirit in the prophets⁶ ; and hath since done it in his own person, and

⁵ Rom. i. 21—23.

⁶ 1 Pet. i. 11.

by his evangelists and apostles in the New Testament. And that we may be sure it is he, and he alone, that hath done it, he himself hath assured us of it with his own mouth, saying, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him⁷;" and by his Evangelist, saying, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him⁸;" he who alone could do it,—as being the only-begotten of the Father, of the same form or nature with him,—he hath declared, he hath revealed, all that we need to know or believe concerning God, to our serving him in this world, and to our enjoyment of him in the next: and therefore he is properly called the "Sun of Righteousness⁹," "and the Light of the world¹," "the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world²;" it being only by him that any man can see God, or any thing relating to the other world, as it is by the light of the sun that we see the things of this world.

And as the light of the sun hath always heat and vigour going along with it, so hath the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ: it hath so much power and efficacy, that he, by it, doth not only enlighten the medium, but the eye,—the eye of our minds,—that we may see the wondrous things that are written in the law of God: as he opened his Apostles' "understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures³," and Lydia's heart, so that she "attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul⁴." So, if we consult the oracles of Christ, and keep our eye fixed on him, he will not only shew us what we ought to believe and know of God, but likewise open our hearts to receive and digest it; so that our whole souls shall be overspread with a quick sense and feeling of it. I do not

⁷ Matt. xi. 27.⁸ John i. 18.⁹ Mal. iv. 2.¹ John viii. 12; xix. 5.² Ib. i. 9.³ Luke xxiv. 45.⁴ Acts xvi. 14.

say that we shall be able to comprehend his divine nature and properties, so as to form any clear ideas or notions of him in our brains, as he is in himself; for that is impossible for us mortals to do, who have no capacities for it. And, therefore, they who pretend to it, or attempt it, are guilty of high presumption, and betray their pride and folly, as much, nay more, than if they should endeavour to grasp the whole heavens within the palms of their hands: be sure they have no true knowledge of God; for they know not so much of him, as that he is incomprehensible, and infinitely beyond the reach of their finite understandings; whereas the knowledge of God, which we are taught by Jesus Christ in his holy word, is quite of another nature. It consists not in having ideas and speculations of him in our heads; but in having such a quick and lively sense of him in our hearts, that our whole souls are filled with admiration, and love, and fear, of his divine perfections, so that we “taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come⁵,” and know so as to taste, that the “Lord is gracious⁶,” feeling ourselves touched to the quick, and strangely affected with his glory, power, and goodness, beyond what we ourselves are able to conceive, much less express, to other people.

Thus, therefore, Christ is the way to know God effectually; to know that he is Jehovah—Being itself—existing in and of himself, and giving existence to all things else; that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, these three are this one Jehovah; that he is “from everlasting to everlasting, God blessed for ever,” that he is every where, knows all things, and can do what he will; that he made all things by the word of his power, and still upholds and governs all things according to the pleasure of his will; that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without him; and that the very hairs of every man’s head are numbered by him; that he is the “Lord of sabaoth, the Lord of

⁵ Heb. vi. 5.

⁶ 1 Pet. ii. 3.

heaven and earth," the Lord God omnipotent, that reigns and rules over the whole world, and doth whatsoever he pleaseth in it; that he is the chief, the only good in the world, in whose favour is life, in whose "presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore." All this, and far more than I am able to express, we may all know of God by his Son, who hath revealed him to us, and still doth it in us by his Spirit moving upon our souls, and imprinting what he had revealed upon our hearts; so that we may read it there also, and be accordingly affected with it. But no man can ever attain to so much as this, even to know God and the Father, unto whom he shall come, aright, any other way, than by his Son Jesus Christ. And, therefore, no man, be sure, can come unto the Father, but by him.

But by him we may come, not only to the knowledge, but likewise into the favour of Almighty God,—which is the main thing we come unto him for, and that which seems chiefly designed by this phrase in my text, "No man cometh unto the Father;" that is, no man cometh to him, so as to get into his love and favour, by any other than by me. And it is well that we can do it by him; for we cannot imagine any other way how it is possible for us to do it.

For what other way can we propose to ourselves, whereby we can possibly find any grace or favour in the sight of God? God, as we have observed, is an infinite, almighty, eternal Being, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Lord and Governor of the whole world: we, at the best, are a company of little creatures, that were taken out of the earth, and must return to it again. How then can we expect that he should have any regard to us? "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Especially if we consider withal, it was he

that made us; and that made us for himself, to serve and honour him. But we have not done it, nor are capable of doing it of ourselves, having so far corrupted ourselves, that we are not fit for the work he made us for: and, therefore, are justly fallen under his displeasure; and never did, nor can do any one thing that is pleasing and acceptable in his sight: nothing but what provokes and incenseth him more against us, in not answering the end for which he made us. How, then, can we look for any kindness from him? What can we do to deserve it? And to which of the saints, to which of the angels, shall we go, to restore us to the favour of God? Others may think what they please; for my part I cannot imagine how all the creatures in the world can do it. I know there are many holy, many glorious creatures in heaven: but how holy, how glorious soever they are, they are still but creatures, and, as such, infinitely below God, as I myself am. How, then, can I go to God? What can I say to him? How can I answer for what I have done to provoke him? "He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman," or umpire, "betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both^s." No, certainly; though we had ransacked the whole creation, we could never have found one that could lay his hand both upon God and us, and so bring us together.

But though we could not, God, by his infinite wisdom and goodness, hath found One; or, rather, he himself hath raised up One, on purpose to do it,—even his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, who being God from all eternity, of the same substance with the Father; and having, in time, taken upon him the nature of man, by uniting it to his own divine Person, and so being both God and man too; as God, he can lay his hand upon God; as man, he can lay it upon man; and so, as God-man, can bring them together, and make

^s Job ix. 33, 34.

them at one again. But for that purpose he, being thus made flesh, offered it up as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, suffering that death, in their nature, which they themselves must otherwise have suffered, every one in his own person, for the offences which they had committed against God; and, therefore, he is called “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world⁹,” and is said “to be a propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world¹,” because in him, and by virtue of that propitiatory sacrifice which he once offered for mankind, God is become propitious, merciful, and gracious to them, pardoning their offences, and receiving them again into his favour, “to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved².”

This, I confess, is a great mystery; such as could never have entered into the heart of man, unless God himself had revealed it. But now that he hath revealed it, as we have all the ground and reason that can be to believe it, so the whole way of our coming unto God by Christ is thereby made plain and easy to us; for though God being infinitely above us, and so it is impossible for us to come immediately at him, yet he having taken upon him our nature, so as to be God and man in the same Person, by applying ourselves unto him, as he is man, we come unto God too, the same Person being both. So that it is as he is man, that he is properly “the way” whereby we come unto God: he being, as such, the mediator between God and us, as his apostle hath taught us, saying, “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, having given himself a ransom for all³,” as it is in the original. As he is the man Christ Jesus, he is the mediator between God and man; and executes that office effectually by means of the ransom that he hath given for all men: so that

⁹ John i. 29.

² Eph. i. 6.

¹ 1 John ii. 2.

³ 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.

any man may now go unto God, though not immediately, yet by this one mediator between God and him. To the same purpose is that of St. John: "If any man sin," (as we all have,) "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins⁴," &c. Because he is the propitiation for our sins, by offering up himself, as man, in our stead, he is therefore our advocate with the Father, mediating, or interceding, between him and us, that, our sins, whereby we have offended him, being forgiven, we may be received again into his grace and favour. And, therefore, as he being the only mediator between God and man, no man can come unto God, or the Father, as he himself hath said, but only by him; so there is no man but by him may come unto the Father: for, if we first go to him, he presents us to the Father, who is graciously pleased to accept of us for his sake who brings us to him, and upon the account of that mediation which he maketh for us.

But how doth he present us? Not in our corrupt and sinful state; not such as we are by nature; but upon our repentance and faith in him. He first washeth us from our sins in his own blood, purgeth our consciences from "dead works," and purifieth us to himself a "peculiar people," real and sound members of his own body, the Church; and then he presents us, as such, unto God. This he himself hath taught us by his apostle, saying, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish⁵." These words are much to be observed in this case, because they clearly shew how Christ, as man, presents us to himself as God, and so how we come unto the Father by him; for here we

⁴ 1 John ii. 1. 3.

⁵ Eph. v. 25—27.

see, that he, having given himself for us, and so redeemed us to himself, first sanctifies and cleanseth, and then presents us without spot or wrinkle, or any thing that may be offensive to God, and provoke him to reject us; but that we may appear in his sight holy and without blemish, though not as we are in ourselves, yet as we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, as it follows in the text: "As we are joined to him⁶," as a wife to her husband, and so are under his covert, and endowed with his righteousness, as a wife is with her husband's estate and honour. For by this means, as the same apostle elsewhere expresseth it, we are found in him, "not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith⁷." So that being found in him, members of his body, besides our own righteousness, which is imperfect, we have another righteousness, the righteousness of God himself, which, being absolutely perfect, by that we appear and are accounted righteous before God, and he is pleased to accept of us, as such, in his Son, who, being united to himself by faith, are therefore interested in his merits and righteousness aforesaid.

Thus, although we "were sometime alienated, and enemies in our mind by wicked works, yet Christ hath now reconciled us unto God in the body of his flesh through death, to present us holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in his sight⁸." So that "now in Christ Jesus we who were sometimes far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ, who is our peace⁹." And "through him we, both Jews and Gentiles," even all true believers, "have access by one Spirit unto the Father¹⁰." For all the sound members of Christ, being led by one and the same Spirit,—that which proceeds from him their head,—by that they have access, and so come by him unto the Father; that is, unto Almighty

⁶ Eph. v. 30.

⁷ Phil. iii. 9.

⁸ Col. i. 21, 22.

⁹ Eph. ii. 13, 14.

¹⁰ Ver. 18.

God, who now looking upon them as righteous in his Son is so far reconciled to them, that he is become their Father. And they accordingly come unto him as such. And that may be the reason wherefore our Saviour in my text doth not say, "No man cometh unto God," but, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me," to shew, that by him we do not go unto God, as he is in himself, but as he is the Father, the Father of him our Lord Christ; and in him our God and our Father: who, therefore, commands us also to address ourselves unto God always under that relation, —as he is Our Father which is in heaven.

But, "behold" here "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God¹." What cause have we to admire the "height, the depth, the breadth, the length of" this divine love! But how came we into so near a relation to the most high God? Only by his Son Jesus Christ. It is he who gives this power to those who receive and believe on him, "to become the sons of God²," and so to come unto God as their Father—as one who hath a special love and kindness for them above all the people upon earth, and will, accordingly, take care of them and bless them; defend them from all evil, and make all things work together for their good; provide all things necessary for them in this life, and then bring them to their inheritance, "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them³."

For being thus brought into the favour of God by his only-begotten Son, in whom they believe, by him they come at last to his kingdom in heaven, there to live with him, and enjoy him for ever; and so "receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls⁴." To which there is no way possible for any man to come, but only by Jesus Christ; "for there is none other name under heaven given among men,

¹ 1 John iii. 1.

³ 1 Pet. i. 4.

² John i. 12.

⁴ Ver. 9.

whereby we must be saved ⁵." But "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them ⁶."

These things I have endeavoured to make as plain as I could in so few words, both for your satisfaction and my own: there being nothing that we are more concerned to understand, than what we ought to believe and know concerning that invisible, almighty Being, that made us and all the world; and how, notwithstanding our manifold provocations of him, we may regain his favour, so as to be happy in him for ever. Now, as we have seen, there is no way whereby it is possible for any man to do this, but only by Jesus Christ; according to what he himself here saith, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." And, therefore, if any man seek it any other way, he will be so far from finding any favour with God, that he will find God more incensed against him for offering to come unto him, and seek his favour, any other way, but that which he himself hath made and prescribed for it. The consideration whereof makes me sometimes pity the sad estate of those who "deny the Lord that bought them," and so make themselves incapable of all those blessings that he hath bought for them.

But that, I hope, is not the case of any here present; you being all taught of God, that there is no way of coming thus unto him, but only by his only-begotten Son, your only Saviour and Advocate with him: and therefore you must needs be solicitous to know what must be done on your parts, in order to it, or how you may come unto the Father by the Son.

First, therefore, as ever ye desire to come unto the Father by the Son, ye must first come unto the Son, that is, you must believe in him, as he himself hath taught us ⁷. Ye must believe that he is the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, so as to be one with the Father ⁸, and that in

⁵ Acts iv. 12.

⁷ John vi. 35.

⁶ Heb. vii. 25.

⁸ Ib. x. 30.

the fulness of time the Father sent him into the world to reveal his will to mankind, to reconcile them to himself by dying in their stead, and so to be the mediator between God and man; and accordingly you must believe and trust on him, on him alone, to restore you to the favour and kingdom of God; and you must love and honour him with all your hearts for it. He that doth not this, doth not come unto the Son, and, therefore, cannot come unto the Father by him, but must "die in his sins"⁹. [But God hath that infinite love for his Son, that whosoever loveth and believeth in the Son is for that very reason beloved by the Father: "The Father himself," saith he, "loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God"¹.]

But, then, you must express this your faith and love unto the Son by serving him, and doing whatsoever he hath commanded². And for that purpose you must keep close to the rule laid down by the apostle, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him"³: that is, Whatsoever ye do, do it in obedience to his commands, for his sake, trusting and believing in him to direct and assist you in it, and to intercede with the Father to accept of it. This is to serve the Lord Christ indeed; and, therefore, whatsoever is thus done, is acceptable to God through him⁴; and they who thus serve the Son are so highly in the favour of God the Father, that he honours them for it: "If any man serve me," saith the Son, "him will my Father honour"⁵.

Especially in all your addresses unto God, for any grace or blessing you desire, ye must be sure to ask it only in the name of his Son Jesus: for ye, who have so often offended God, would never have been capable of any favour from him, unless his Son had merited all ye can desire: ye have no ground to expect any thing,

⁹ John viii. 24.

¹ Ib. xvi. 27.

² Ib. xiv. 15.

³ Col. iii. 17.

⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

⁵ John xii. 26.

unless ye desire it in the name and upon the account of his said merits, and the mediation which, by virtue thereof, he maketh for you: but that way ye may come to God, so as to obtain any thing that is good for you; for ye have his own word for that, saying, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you⁶." And, therefore, in all your prayers, ye must not only make use of Christ's name, as we do in all our Collects, but ye must keep your minds and your faith fixed wholly upon him, firmly believing that God, for his sake, will grant whatsoever you ask that is really good for you; and then ye will be sure to have it, as sure as God's word is true;—so powerful is the name of Christ with Almighty God! He is the Son of his love, with whom he is well-pleased, and in whom he is therefore pleased with all those who come to him in his name. So that although no man can come unto him any other way, yet any man may thus come unto the Father by the Son.

And we, as well as any other. Let us, therefore, now resolve to do so, as ever we desire to go unto the Father, so as to be happy in the enjoyment of his love and favour: let us first go unto his Son the Lord Jesus, so as to become his disciples indeed, believing and practising all that he hath taught us: and let none of us doubt but he will accept of us, seeing he hath said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out⁷." In humble confidence whereof, let us therefore, by a quick and lively faith, apply ourselves to him, and take all opportunities that we can get of waiting upon him in his house, and at his holy table, that he may dwell in us, and we in him; that, believing and depending stedfastly upon him, we may, by him, get up and come to God the Father, so as to have him to be our God, and our Father. How happy shall we then be! We shall then be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: we shall then abide under the shadow of the Almighty, and have his truth to be our

⁶ John xvi. 23.

⁷ Ib. vi. 37.

shield and buckler ; his grace will be always sufficient for us, and his Spirit ready to assist and direct us in all our ways. He will never leave us nor forsake us, but guide us by his counsel, till he receive us into glory. So that all things shall work together for our good through the whole course of our pilgrimage upon earth ; and then we shall come to God in heaven, and there live with him, behold him, adore him, and enjoy him for ever. And all through him, by whom we come unto him, even the ever-blessed Jesus, our only mediator and advocate. To whom be glory, now and for ever.

THE END.

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